



MERCY MARKS THE

Century

Miss Mary Loretta O'Connor, R. S. M.

And His mercy is from generation



unto generation to them that fear Him.

(Luke, I: 50.)

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Mercy Marks the Century



Merry Marks the Century

by

Sister Mary Loretto O'Connor, R.S.M., A.M.

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✠ RUSSELL J. McVINNEY, D.D.

Bishop of Providence

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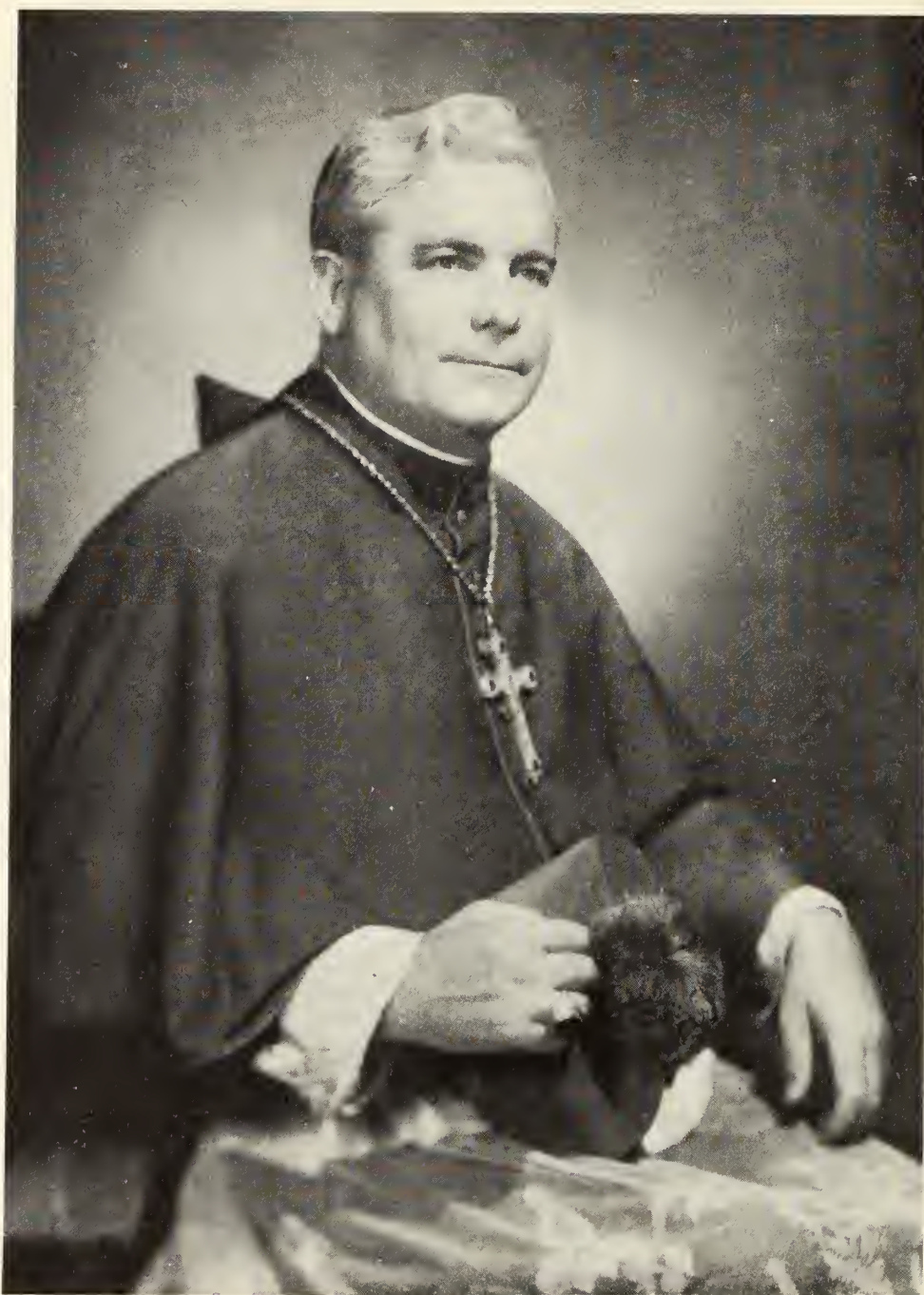


Dedication . . .

To Our Lady of Mercy, through whom alone Christ will reign.

"Look now upon the face that most resembles Christ, for only its likeness can prepare thee to see Christ."

—Dante, *Divina Commedia*



HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST REVEREND RUSSELL J. MCVINNEY, D.D.
Bishop of Providence

As The Religious Sisters of Mercy begin their second century of prayer and labor in the diocese of Providence, they pause to pay tribute to His Excellency, the Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D., Bishop of Providence.

Through the years, from Bishop O'Reilly's day until the present, the Shepherd of the diocese has always been a friend and benefactor to this community. Today, the Sisters realize that in the paternal and sincere devotedness of Bishop McVinney, history repeats itself. He has proved himself a true father, spiritual leader, and friend in their need. This is particularly evident in his recent endorsement of the Centennial Campaign.

In his earnest performance of the duties incumbent upon him by reason of his high ecclesiastical office, in his true devotion to Mary, Mother of Hope, in his filial obedience to the wishes of Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, he offers to the Religious of his diocese inspirational spiritual leadership. Though his episcopate has embraced but a few short years, it has been abundantly fruitful. His consecration of the diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, his strengthening of the organization of the Holy Name Society, his pilgrimage to Rome during the Holy Year of 1950, his creation of new parishes have marked him as an ardent Church leader.

Blessing new convents, schools, confirming large groups of young people, encouraging religious and lay effort in the fields of radio, journalism, and propagation of the Faith, his zeal encourages the flock under his care, to whom he is a "pattern from the heart." Diocesan charities look to him for support and are not disappointed. Each successive year, he has widened the scope of these charities to benefit a greater number of the old, the impoverished, the orphan, the sick.

He has manifested his own great generosity of soul in recognizing the honor due to so many of his outstanding clergy.

With loyal devotion, then, the Religious Sisters of Mercy unite in fervent prayer for their Bishop, commending him to Our Lady of Mercy in whom he has placed his hope.



RIGHT REVEREND MONSIGNOR PETER E. BLESSING, D.D., V.G.

Through the years, the Sisters of Mercy have had no more sterling friend among the members of the diocesan clergy than the Right Reverend Monsignor Peter E. Blessing, D.D., V.G. From his youth when he was one of their students until today, Monsignor has been identified with the Sisters' interests and projects. A faithful friend in every circumstance, the venerable Monsignor has been for many years moderator of the Saint Francis Xavier Alumnae Association and of the Catholic Woman's Club. He serves as Vice-President of the Corporation of Saint Francis Xavier's Convent and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Corporation of Salve Regina College. It is truly meet and just that the Sisters of Mercy should give prayerful thanksgiving to God for the strong defense of this faithful friend.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., Mother Provincial, at whose request this work was undertaken, for her valued criticism of the manuscript, to the members of the Provincial Council for assistance in checking sources, to the senior Sisters of the Community who were interviewed for information, to Reverend Mother Mary Ethelreda of the Hartford Community for her gracious courtesy in allowing the use of her records, to the Sisters who assisted with typing, and to all who by their prayers encouraged the author.

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Foreword

The beginnings of Catholic Education in the area which now comprises the Diocese of Providence were not auspicious. Indeed, it required the holy hardihood of the saint and the imagination of the haloed visionary to see any hope of spiritual fruition deriving from the modest house on High Street that sheltered the first five Sisters of Mercy to come to this part of the vineyard. The vaunted liberalism of Roger Williams, who supposedly founded this community on the principle of religious liberty, was not extended to the Catholics. In fact, so bitter was the opposition of the local populace that the Sisters had to be smuggled in. And they were not here very long when the bitterly anti-Catholic Yankees, made mad by the frenzied propaganda of the Know-Nothing movement, marched on the convent. But the good Bishop had assembled a few hundred sturdy Irishmen who withstood the rioting mob. Not wishing to mix with brave men, these dastardly purveyors of hate, who thought they had only defenseless women to cope with, withdrew.

The affronts, the insults, and the indignities were borne with stoical grace and divinely inspired patience. And now after 100 years of service the Order of the Sisters of Mercy is the largest teaching Community serving the Providence Diocese. The Sisters of Mercy staff 25 of our parochial schools and minister to 23,000 pupils in their various teaching establishments, ranging from primary to college grades.

The truly astounding accomplishments of these Sisters in the Diocese of Providence is but one facet of the scintillating crown of achievement of these devoted daughters of Mother McAuley. This work had its inspiration in that most remarkable young Irish woman who was destined by God's grace to lay the foundation of the Institute of Mercy. With a modesty characteristic of her whole approach to the monumental problems that were destined to confront her, she "never set out to establish a community of religious women or to carry her own sphere of influence beyond Dublin, her native city." Yet one hundred years later the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, said, "To no small degree the Church in the United States owes it to the Sisters of Mercy that it has been able to maintain its parochial schools. Besides this they have extended their charity to the sick not only in hospitals but also in their homes; and have shown true Christian charity to the poor forsaken ones of this world, the orphans, the feeble, and the aged."

To tell the fascinating and soul stirring story of this body of devoted and apostolic daughters of Mother Mary Catherine McAuley, and to pay fitting tribute to the "everlasting foundations" of this zealous servant of God on the occasion of the centenary of their work here, Sister Mary Loretto O'Connor, R.S.M., A.M., has written this scholarly work of love, titled "Mercy Marks the Century". I hail it as a valuable contribution to the arcana of the Catholic Church in this area. I regard it not only as a worthy record of uncompromising devotedness to and of distinguished achievement in the service of God; but as a premise and promise of greater glories to God, to Whose name alone these works give glory, and of unparalleled achievement by the devoted Sisters of Mercy.

✠ RUSSELL J. McVINNEY, D.D.

Bishop of Providence



CHAPTER ONE

Mercy Marks The Century

“**M**ERCY is the main artery from the Divine to the human heart.” Perhaps there is no person who realized this truth more fully than the Irish heiress, Mother Mary Catherine McAuley, the revered foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, who made every possible sacrifice to establish the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy in order that God's loving mercy might have a direct channel through which to flow into the hearts of His poor, His sick, His needy.

The year nineteen hundred fifty-one marks the centennial year of the Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Providence. For, in 1851, the holy and zealous Most Reverend Bernard O'Reilly invited these Sisters to come to Providence to assist him in the care of his children. Under his guidance and that of his holy successors, the Most Reverend Bishops McFarland, Harkins, Hickey, Keough, and the present shepherd of the flock, Bishop McViney, the Sisters' lives, dedicated to prayer and work are at once a canticle of praise to Mary, the Queen of Mercy, and the human artery through which the mercy of Her Divine Son has been conveyed to man. The Sisters have lovingly devoted themselves to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. They have cared for the sick, visited the prisoner, taught Christ's gospel to the poor, mothered the orphan, lighted the lamp of learning for the children of all ages.

A review of the Sisters' good works performed through a century can but glorify the mercy of God Who called them to a life of voluntary poverty, chastity, obedience, and the care of the poor, sick and ignorant. He has sustained them in that vocation, given them strength to persevere, energized their activities with supernatural power, and blessed their human co-operation with fecundity a hundredfold. To Him belongs the glory of that century of mercy from which hundreds of thousands in the Diocese of Providence have reaped the benefits.

Working quietly and patiently from very small beginnings, the Sisters of Mercy today enable thousands to receive the strength of the Gospel message through their schools and colleges. At present, more than 23,000 young people are encompassed in the entire teaching program of the Sisters of Mercy in their elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, colleges and novitiate. Besides the specific work of the classroom, the Sisters also inculcate Christian principles in Sunday schools, catechetical and vacation schools, in convert classes, work with the deaf, in visitation of the sick and infirm in hospitals and other institutions.

A brief study of the achievements of a century will but confirm the words of the Psalmist, “His mercy is above all His works”.

Saint Xavier's Academy . . . 1851-1951

Saint Francis Xavier's Academy, oldest Catholic secondary school in the State, observes its one hundredth anniversary in 1951. Begun in two rooms and with a registration of twenty pupils, the Academy has now graduated 8,000 students in its century of Christian education.

Classes are now held in the three buildings comprising the school: in Xavier Hall, the convent building; in Mercy Hall, the ivy-covered building; and in Academy Hall, newest of the three structures.

Of these three, Mercy Hall is the oldest. Construction begun in 1855 was completed in 1856, and dedicated on the feast of the Ascension. This first structure, half the size of the present building, was used conjointly as an orphan asylum and academy. On the first floor, the orphans had their classroom and parlor, on the fourth floor their dormitory. Second and third floors served for the academy; on the second the students' classroom and parlor, on the third, their dormitory. When the orphans moved to the new home on Prairie Avenue in 1862, academy students, day and resident from primary through high school, maintained the use of the entire building. In 1866 an addition was made, and the building today known as Mercy Hall was completed.

From 1874, when all boarders were transferred from Saint Xavier's to Bayview, rooms in Mercy Hall were used as convent quarters until 1899 when the ivy-covered structure was remodelled for school use only, still retaining primary through high school students.

Xavier Hall, or the convent building as it stands today, was ready for occupancy for the Sisters in 1897. There, two rooms were retained for school purposes: the large classroom and a hall on the first floor. Now the hall has been reconverted to the school library.

Mercy and Xavier Halls were inadequate for the increasing high school registration. Gradually grammar grades were eliminated; in 1919 the Academy was opened to high school students only. Enrollment continued to increase; a third building became necessary.

Ground was broken for Academy Hall in 1927 and the novitiate, formerly located in that area, was moved to Mount Saint Rita. The "new building" was dedicated by the late Most Reverend William Augustine Hickey, and opened in January, 1929.

Today, Saint Xavier's graduates approximately 250 students each year. Under the leadership of Sister Mary Mauritia McGuirl, principal since 1947, it maintains the atmosphere of serious study, of purposeful activity, of generous co-operation which Sister so insistently encourages. It is staffed by twenty-eight Sisters, two priests, and four lay teachers. The Academy has full recognition of the State Department of Education and of the Rhode Island Honor Society; is a member of the Secondary Schools Association of Rhode Island and of the National Catholic Educational Association.

Curriculum planning includes college preparatory groups: classical, college general, and scientific students; business training groups: secretarial, bookkeep-

ing, and clerical students. Training in art, music, and physical education, a guidance and visual aids program round out the students' programs. A placement bureau aids them in making a transition from school to the business world.

Foremost among extra-curricular activities is the Sodality of Our Lady of Mercy, canonically erected and affiliated with the Prima Primaria Sodality in Rome. Its program reaches each individual not only through the school sodality board composed of seven seniors but also through homeroom units. It aims at personal sanctification of its members and defense of the Church.

Besides daily formal instruction in religion, the Academy purposes to strengthen religious convictions through devotion to the Sacred Heart, annual retreats, and through the Sodality's spiritual program.

Related to the English curriculum are the courses in dramatics and journalism. Dramatics clubs entertain the student body on festive occasions during the year. They produce public plays at Christmas time, in the spring, and during Commencement Week.

Journalism classes issue the school annual, *The Xavier*, and the paper, *The Xavierette*. Creative writing, taught to a select group of seniors, finds incentive in the production of an annual magazine, *The Cupola*. Sodality board members edit *The Actionist*, official Sodality organ. The school issues a handbook, and has an organized news bureau; with columns and feature stories appearing in *The Providence Visitor*, *The Providence Journal-Bulletin*, and *The Pawtucket Times*. In co-operation with the diocesan director of radio activities, Saint Xavier's students currently broadcast over local stations. Ave Maria Choristers and the World Affairs Forum arrange programs upon request. A library club enhances the reading program of the English curriculum.

Foreign language clubs in Latin, French, and Spanish extend the work of the classroom. Latin Club members participate in the National Latin Competitive examinations, aim for admission into the Latin Honor Society, study Latin cultural background and Roman history.

Affiliated with public and private schools in Providence, the Junior Alliance Francaise aims to interest students in France and her people through a series of programs held in member schools five times annually. Members of the French Club conduct monthly meetings in school using the French paper *La Croisade* as program material.

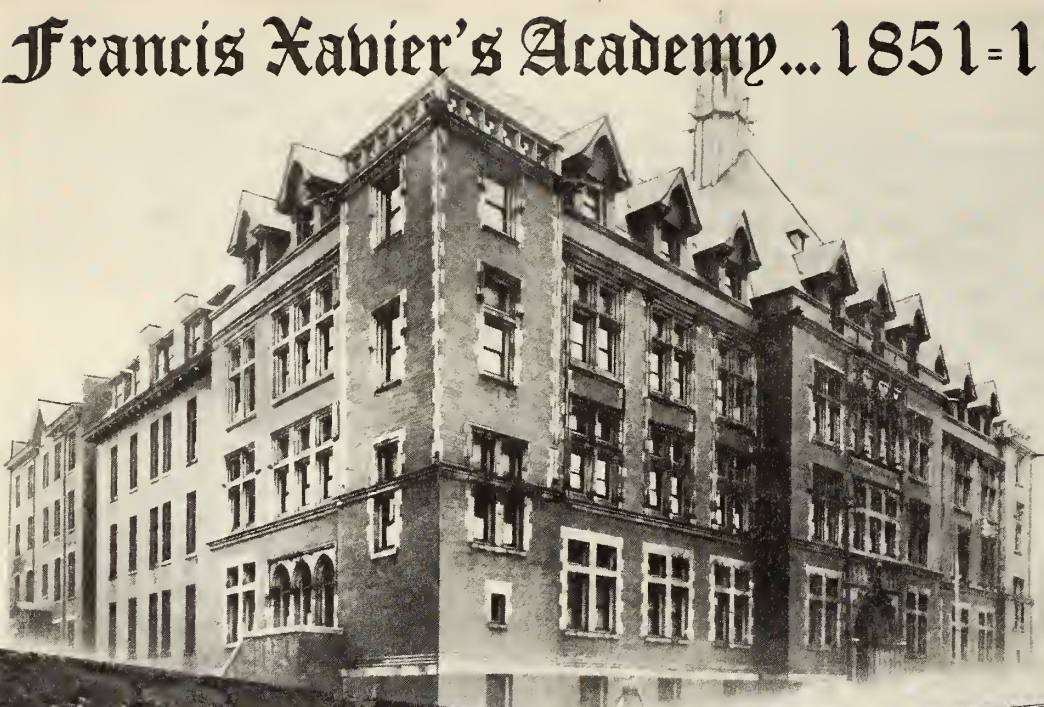
Spanish conversation through games, skits, and songs, motion pictures, loan packets, displays from the United States Office of Education, and current magazines supplement knowledge attained in class work.

Science Club members hear speakers on current phases of scientific progress, witness visual aids, have field trips, and sponsor an exhibition of Science Fair projects in the school.

Photography, art, sewing, cooking, typing for non-commercial students, and basketball are taught as extra-curricular work.

Supplementing history classes, the World Affairs Forum offers training in the democratic processes, the use of library and source material, critical evalua-

St. Francis Xavier's Academy... 1851-1951



Commencement line .
Saint Xavier's graduates
about two hundred fifty
seniors annually.



Sodalists of Our Lady of
Mercy have a Living Ros-
ary annually in October.



Journalism club members get the feel of newspaper
organization. A staff of twenty girls chosen from
this club edit the school newspaper, the *Xavierette*.



Most Rev. Russell J. McVinney, D.D., Bishop of
Providence, grants an interview to the officers of the
Sodality of Our Lady of Mercy approving their year's
program.



Sister Mary Mauritia, R.S.M., principal of Saint Xavier's, receives guests at the annual Junior Prom.

Part of the home economics course includes making clothing. Here a freshman finishes an apron.



Selecting periodicals from the rack in the library.



Annually Saint Xavier's rates high at the Rhode Island Schools Science Fair.

World Affairs Forum members convene to plan discussions of timely interest and importance.



An art club student works in oils.



Basketball is part of the gymnasium program.



An annual operetta is staged by the Glee Club to provide a contribution for the diocesan Catholic Charities Fund Appeal.





Sisters pray daily for those whom they visit, relieve, and instruct.



An annual Retreat is part of the spiritual program.



Nativity tableau from the annual Christmas program staged by the Junior Dramatics Club at S. X. A.



Piano, violin.



xylophone.



cello tunes up for full orchestra rehearsal under Rev. Angelo Lapolla, director.



A demonstration lesson in a typing class.



Classical students persevere in Latin and Greek. Here a small group prepares for a Latin club meeting.



The "Fighting 69th", a ramification of the Christopher movement, encourages emphasis on the 6th and 9th Commandments.



Creative writing groups edit a school magazine, *The Cupola*.

tion of fact and opinion. By means of panel discussions, round table discussions, and "town meetings", members present throughout the year the results of their investigations on some ten problem areas. Four delegates represent Saint Xavier's at the annual Model Congress held at Rhode Island State College.

Musical ability is given further training in the glee club, orchestra, and in private lessons in piano, violin, organ, and harp. Reverend Angelo Lapolla, director of the orchestra, rehearses girls in selections from the classics, the operas, and standard musical compositions, to be used in school programs and assemblies. The Ave Maria Choristers, or glee club, furnish vocal music at retreats and assemblies. They stage an annual operetta for the benefit of the diocesan Catholic Charities Fund Appeal.

A planned lecture program broadens the intellectual vision of academy students. During American Education Week, Catholic Book Week, Catholic Press Month, Vocation Week, World Sodality Day, and Commencement, speakers of note appear at the rostrum to stress aspects of Christian living.

Scholarships are awarded to prospective academy students through the generosity of our Most Reverend Bishop and Reverend Pastors, through competitive examinations by the Catholic Woman's Club, the Marian Motherhood Assembly, and the Saint Francis Xavier Alumnae Association.

Many Saint Xavier's students have merited praiseworthy comment outside the walls of their Alma Mater. Among the most treasured, perhaps, were the words of praise bestowed on the Academy in a recent visit from the Mother General of the Sisters of Mercy, Mother Mary Bernardine Purcell. She congratulated the school on the number of religious vocations it offered each year, not only to the Sisters of Mercy, but to other communities as well. Approximately ten per cent of the senior class enter religious life each year. Mother General attributed this splendid record of generosity to the devotion to Our Lady prevailing in the Academy.

Regional Confraternity of Christian Doctrine sessions list Academy seniors as speakers on their youth panels. Employers in law offices, banking, insurance offices, and elsewhere appreciate the high calibre of work done by graduates of Saint Xavier's commercial department. Not only have students won scholarships to liberal arts and business colleges, but have gained positions of responsibility at these institutions. Presidents of student councils, class presidents, editors of college papers, college representatives to nationwide conventions are often young women who were promising S. X. A. graduates. On a national scale, Saint Xavier's has merited acclaim through the President's "Hire the Physically Handicapped Essay Contest". For two consecutive years, President Truman awarded prizes to Betty Ann Farrell, '50 and to Anne Manning, '51, for winning essays in this national competition. Academy students have also achieved top rank in national competitive Latin and French examinations.

Here in Rhode Island, Saint Xavier's girls have claimed high honors in the Rhode Island Science Fair since its inception in 1946. Each year an outstanding project has been sent to a regional fair, and a scholarship awarded to some de-

serving senior. Perhaps the widest publicity was given to the exhibit of Kathleen Roan, '48, whose snow-making device was exhibited in Hayden Planetarium, New York.

Delegates from the World Affairs Forum represent the Academy annually at the Rhode Island Model Congress held in Rhode Island State College. They have won medals both in the House and in the Senate for presentation of bills on contemporary problems. The Academy holds a 13-year record of zeal for the Catholic press by reason of its support of the *Providence Visitor* Press Crusade; girls rank highest in achievement among high schools of the State.

More recently, the work of the Christophers, as such, has been introduced into the Academy; though to live Christian principles has ever been the aim of S. X. A. students. Today, however, in accord with the need of the time, "Christopher" projects have been stressed and carried out. Such is the letter writing campaign regarding governmental legislation, the banning of movies, the modesty in dress campaign. "The Fighting 69th", a further ramification of the Christopher approach, has been organized to promote zeal for observance of the sixth and ninth commandments. Commercial students attend the Christopher Career Guidance School whose theme is "to put Christ in the market place".

Several Xavierites have organized a Block Rosary in their parishes. Others enshrine the "Little Pilgrim Virgin" statue in their homes and invite friends to recite the Rosary. Since Our Lady's message of Fatima has been promulgated, an intensive campaign to promote the recitation of the Rosary has been sponsored. Saint Xavier's students were heard daily reciting the rosary at 12:15 p.m. in a tape-recorded program over a local radio station.

Pastors and moderators of youth organizations in local parishes look to Academy students for leadership and assistance. They are not disappointed. S. X. A. girls do catechetical work, assist in church work where there are no Sisters, supply the needy with food and clothing especially at Thanksgiving and Christmas time. For years they have enlarged the scope of their Christlike giving by contributing generously to the missions through the office of the Propagation of the Faith.

Such is today's Saint Xavier's Academy, a school old and glorious in tradition. Well-organized, equipped, and staffed, it maintains the reputation gained by its former principals, teachers, and students. Corridors, classrooms, and campus are alive with the activity, fun, and study of girls whose mothers and grandmothers claim Saint Xavier's as their Alma Mater.

Girls of the 1860's, '70's, '80's, and '90's remember the Academy as a boarding and day school for primary, grammar, and high school students. There is perhaps no graduate now living who remembers the earliest directresses of the Academy. Yet those religious women laid the foundations which the years have proved strong and deep. Mother Mary Xavier Warde, principal from 1851-1858, Mother Mary Josephine Lombard, 1858-1865, Sister Mary Juliana Purcell, 1865-1869 and from 1872-1874; Sister Mary Nolasco Sherman, 1869-1872 are the Academy's revered leaders.

After its resident students had been moved to Bayview and Saint Xavier's admitted only day scholars, the principalship was held successively by Sister Mary Regis Conway, 1874-1883, Sister Mary Xavier McLaughlin, 1883-1889, and Sister Mary Fidelis Nolan, 1889-1899. These religious have now passed to their eternal reward, but the work they accomplished in the hearts of young women shall live forever.

Still living and actively interested in Saint Xavier's and its concerns is Sister Mary Eulalia Quirk, R.S.M., principal from 1899-1932. In her thirty-three years of Academy administration, she recalls many changes, improvements, and progress.

When Sister Mary Eulalia assumed her duties in the September of 1899, 87 pupils were enrolled in the entire Academy, 37 in the high school and 50 boys and girls in the other grades.

Among the teachers at the Academy then was the beloved Sister Margaret Mary Donworth. In 1899, Sister Margaret Mary organized the Saint Francis de Sales Reading Circle in the present *Xavierette* Room. Sister purposed to promote good reading and writing habits. Meetings were held weekly and often an outstanding Catholic lecturer furnished stimulation for thought. After girls had graduated, they returned for round table discussions and aimed to continue the Catholic intellectual atmosphere provided at Saint Xavier's.

After a retreat for this group in 1901, Bishop Harkins, in a closing address, suggested its organization into a Catholic Woman's Club, and appointed a preliminary committee. This group became the first executive board of the present organization which numbers nearly one thousand women. The late Doctor Clara E. Craig was its first president, and the late Most Reverend Austin Dowling its moderator.

Continuing its purpose to "promote Catholic interests of the intellectual order", the club grew to 300 members and was limited to that until Bishop Harkins' death. Since 1935, it has sponsored a yearly scholarship to Saint Xavier's in memory of Sister Margaret Mary.

Sister Margaret Mary also organized the Saint Francis Xavier Alumnae Association in 1906. Its first meeting was held in the convent on May 30 of that year. After Mass and several preliminary addresses, the group elected its first president, the late Miss Agnes C. Gormley. Through the years, the alumnae association has admirably realized its purpose, cordial support of its Alma Mater. A beautifully inscribed tablet outside the present school auditorium keeps fresh in the memory of today's students the loyalty of the alumnae who financed their spacious assembly room. In 1914, the Association affiliated with the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae and this extended its scope of influence.

Mother Mary Hilda Miley, now Mother Provincial of the Province of Providence, was principal at Saint Xavier's from 1932-1936. Mother had taught in the Academy since 1913. It was during her years as administrator that extra-curricula, library, physical education, and study club programs were organized as they function today. The *Xavierette* began its career in 1933. In that same

year, too, the Catholic Teachers' Conclave and the Marian Motherhood Assembly came into being. Since then, the Conclave has been incorporated into the Salve Regina College Guild. The Marian Motherhood Assembly, however, continues in its original purpose: "to co-operate with the teachers of Saint Xavier's Academy in upholding the ideals of Mary, the Mother of God, and in furtherance of Catholic Action as advocated by our Holy Father."

Mother Mary Hilda's administration as principal terminated after four years when she was elected Mother Provincial. Her successor, Sister Mary James O'Hare, teacher in the English department, continued as principal from 1936-1947. Sister's interest in the school was genuine and of long standing, her zeal for its spiritual and material success unabated. An indefatigable worker, Sister was undaunted by planning for the ever increasing enrollments. She encouraged her faculty by providing for assemblies of the best calibre to stimulate intellectual tastes. She organized Our Lady of Mercy Sodality, had the Academy dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at the first World Sodality Day meeting. Sister organized the guidance department, introduced the Placement Bureau, the photography, sewing, art, and foreign language clubs, the creative writing classes and school magazine, the debating league, and the official school handbook. During the emergency period of World War II, Sister planned for home nursing and first aid courses, for aviation and nutritional science. Saint Xavier's maintained a high standard of achievement due to Sister's prayerful zeal and powers of organization shown in the departmentalization of classes under department heads. Sister Mary James was appointed Dean of Salve Regina College in 1947 when she saw the largest class ever to leave the Academy, 307 seniors. She was succeeded at Saint Xavier's by the present principal, Sister Mary Mauritia McGuirl, who is maintaining the high ideals of her predecessors.

Thus concludes Saint Xavier's march of progress during the years. Progress presupposes a goal. The goal of the Christian educator is "to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by Baptism, to co-operate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian." It will be possible to determine the ultimate success of that formation only when the Divine Teacher has finally set His seal of approval upon those who instruct and who are instructed unto justice.

Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum . . . 1851-1951

Always the pet charity project of every Bishop of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Catholic Asylum has been staffed through the years by the Sisters of Mercy.

That the present asylum, situated on the beautiful sloping terrain of 286 acres in Greenville, is a development from the smallest beginnings, few realize. When Bishop O'Reilly brought the Sisters to his diocese in 1851, his first intention was that they should care for the orphans. The earliest home for them was a small cottage adjoining the Sisters' convent on Broad Street, and opened in October of 1851. Bishop O'Reilly had to worry about increasing facilities for thirty little orphan girls, so a second brick building for them was erected in 1856 on Claverick Street. This was shared with Saint Xavier's Academy

students and the entire building called "Saint Mary's of the Ascension". During Bishop McFarland's time, this structure was outgrown, too, and people in the diocese contributed generously towards funds for his proposed new orphanage to be located on Prairie Avenue, Providence.

From its erection in 1862, this orphanage was called the Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum. Since it was placed under the patronage of Saint Aloysius, it was commonly alluded to as "Saint Aloysius Home", but such was not its legal title. Both boys and girls were admitted to the new home.

As time went on, housing accommodations rapidly became more and more inadequate. The several additions to the property made by Bishop Hendricken, Bishop Harkins, and Bishop Hickey were outgrown. Problems increased for the Sisters, too, created by crowded conditions, increased enrollment, and consequent overwork. When the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough became Bishop, he saw the necessity of new accommodations. His was the work of building the present day Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum, of supervising plans for the organization of its work. Ground was broken for the new project on October 25, 1939. One of the principal tributes to his great hearted charity is the prospering of this project, then all-important to the present Archbishop of Baltimore.

Today, 172 children call this beautiful place home. Laughing, happy, well-fed, well-cared for, 103 boys and 69 girls live, study, pray and have fun together under the guidance and care of the Sisters of Mercy.

Are all of these children orphans? No. As a matter of fact, there are very few who have suffered the loss of both parents. The majority of children are those whose mothers are dead and whose fathers are obliged to work for a livelihood. Numerically the second largest group are those children whose mothers are chronically ill, mentally or physically. Only a few come from broken homes. In certain emergency cases, such as desertion by the mother, provision is made for the children. Children are elected and placed by the Bureau of Catholic Charities after investigation of conditions by a social worker and an interview with the parents.

It will be noted that a man whose wife is dead or chronically ill may place his children in the asylum, but a woman whose husband is dead may not be thus accommodated and for this reason. From the State of Rhode Island, she may receive ADC, aid to dependent children. The Bureau of Catholic Charities conforms to State regulations in this, and is of the same mind in regard to it. The mother's duty is to keep the home; the State will aid her in so doing. However, it does allow her part-time work provided that she be present in her home when her children are there and need her.

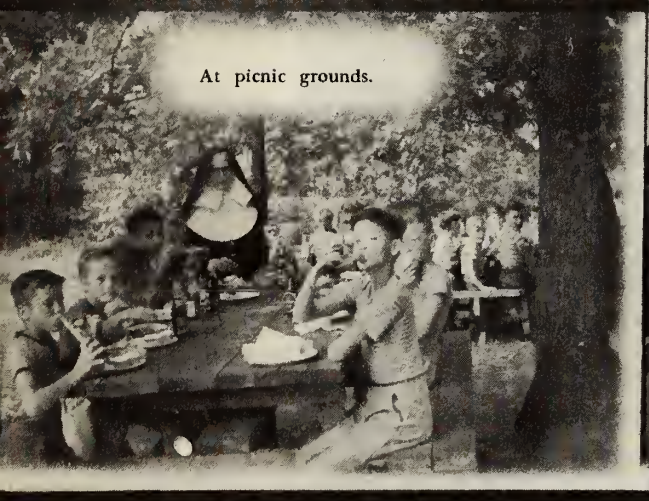
Regarding religion, nationality, or color, no discrimination is made. Catholics, Protestants, and Jews are admitted. It is required that all denominations attend religious services on Sunday; on other days it is optional. Very often the children of non-Catholic parents want to do what they see their little companions doing. There is the incident of the little Jewish girl who begged to



Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum...1851-1951



Most Rev.
Bishop
and the
view the



At picnic grounds.



Scout consecration.



Basketball in action.



Sister coaches.

Russell J. McVinney, D.D.,
vidence, Mr. Charles Kirby,
orable Edmund Flynn, re-



A visit to the sick.

Go ahead, slide!



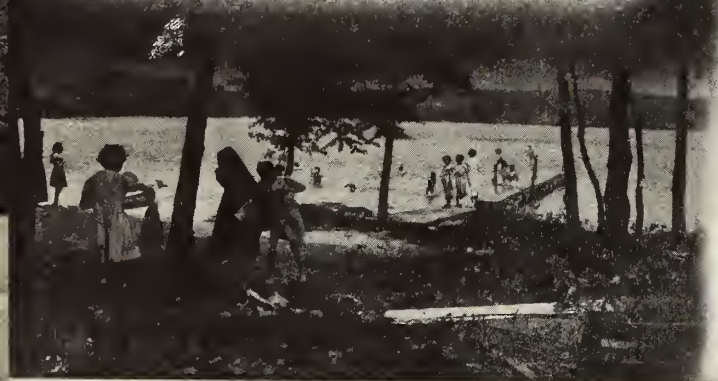
Mutual admiration.

Sister Mary Mark, R.S.M., Super-
ior, presents her jewels in an inter-
view with a visiting Greek student
majoring in sociology.



Good-bye, now . . .

1. Girls enjoy Camp Saint Russell.
2. Dressed for winter fun.
3. Cooperative venture . . .
4. Boys' dining room.
5. Girl Scouts receive insignia.
6. Boys make Camp Saint Russell's beach the finest . .
7. and have fun doing it, too
8. Bring flowers of the rarest . . .
9. On to the skating rink!



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.

be allowed to attend instructions for First Holy Communion with her little friends who were quite eager to "receive Jesus".

"We shall have to wait, dear, until your Daddy comes. We'll ask him," Sister promised.

"And has my Daddy got charge of God?" The child's eyes were large with wonder.

At present, there are three negro children enrolled, and a fair cross-section of nationalities: French, Polish, German, Italian, Rumanian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Scotch, and Irish—all Americans!

Children are usually from families that are poor or at least struggling for a livelihood. Since the institution is diocesan, it is financed almost entirely by money from the annual Catholic Charities Fund Appeal. If a child has an estate, the administration does not draw from this. It is saved to further his later education.

In the organization of personnel, there are two distinct units: a group of eighteen Sisters who staff the home, and a second group of ten Sisters who teach in the school. Nine of the Sisters whose duties are in the house are called "group mothers". They have all a mother's duties except cooking, washing, and nursing care. Special Sisters are appointed to these latter duties. The Sister infirmarian is a registered nurse; the dietitian, cooks, laundresses have their own separate duties.

Children are organized into nine groups. Since the system used is an adaptation of the cottage and congregate systems, the living quarters of each group is a distinct unit, with its own dormitory, lavatory, play and study room.

In the program for the arrangement of groups, chronological age is the predominating consideration. Boys and girls are divided separately according to the following age levels: 5 to 6½; 6½ to 9; 10 to 12 years; 14 to 16 years. Usually there are from ten to fifteen children in the youngest group; others range from fifteen to twenty.

Flexibility in this arrangement is calculated to meet the needs of the individual child. There is little or no adjustment needed in the youngest children's group. However, due to mental age, character traits, personality, habits and pre-home environmental experience, adjustment is necessary on the other age levels. After a brief period of orientation and appraisal, the child is placed in the group which best suits his needs.

Perhaps a glance at the time schedule of the youngest children would convince one that they keep their "mothers" very busy. Of course, they're called in the morning. At Sister's clap, they struggle out of bed, say their prayers at their bedsides, wash and dress. Though they are gradually trained to do these things for themselves, at first much help is needed. When all are in readiness, they go to breakfast. Four children are assigned to each table. Sister serves them, stays with them all through the meal to insure its progress, prevent casualties, and guide their table manners. Each child leaves his dishes in order before saying grace and leaving the table.

To the dormitory, then—it's bed-making time. The ideal is that the children make their own beds. With some assistance in the beginning, they vie with one another to be the first to do it "all by myself". The last step is to place their dolls or teddy-bears (or whatever else boys have) on top of the lovely smooth spread. The children brush their teeth, Sister combs their hair again, and they are ready for school.

Until the children return to school for the afternoon session from 12:40 to 3:00 p.m., Sister says her prayers, attends recreation, and anticipates her night office. Her "family" bound into her at 3:00 p.m., change into play clothes, and hang their school clothes in their lockers. (The children do not wear any uniform dress.) If it's a pleasant day, all adjourn to the play yard, carrying their afternoon snack with them. Sister supervises games. At 4:30, it's time to come in and repair to the washroom again, for Rosary begins in chapel promptly at 5:00 p.m. Supper is at 5:20, study from 6:15 to 7:00 p.m.

School Sisters supervise study in the study rooms of each group. For the youngest children, 7:00 p.m. is their bed-time hour. Everyone is given a bath, says his night prayers by his bedside and hops in beneath the covers. Sister stays right there telling stories until they're all asleep.

Saturdays and Sundays are different. Then they may have company . . . On Saturdays, too, the youngsters have their hair washed and cut.

The older children follow the same time schedule as the younger ones with a few exceptions. They rise at 6:30 a.m., attend 7 o'clock Mass unless their group mother sees a good reason for their being absent. Non-Catholics need not go to daily Mass, but they usually do. The resident chaplain hears Confession before Mass each day. Group mothers are with their children at the Holy Sacrifice; nearly all children receive Holy Communion daily, but this is optional. There is recreation at all meals, but less talking is permitted at breakfast so all will be on time for school. All are expected to dress neatly, care for their clothes, wash and dry dishes, clean their rooms and washrooms, and to be prompt.

Saint Peter's school, adjoining the main building, is staffed by ten Sisters and has an enrollment of nearly 400 pupils in its eight grades. Though built primarily for the home children, it admits boys and girls from the surrounding parishes. This contact with "outsiders" is thought beneficial to them because it broadens their experience, helps their forming friendships which may be helpful in later life.

Health program in the school is serviced by a public health nurse from the State Department and a doctor from Greenville whose services are remunerated by Saint Peter's Club, mothers and friends of the children. A beautiful infirmary in the Home, the attention of a doctor, and the routine check given each child by the Sister nurse, amply provide for the children's health. It is the dietitian's boast that there is not one child who is underweight.

Special training is provided for both girls and boys. The girls are trained in handicraft in correlation with their scout work. They are given cooking

lessons at the Providence Gas Company. They may use the proceeds from sales on their embroidery, crocheting, knitting and sewing as they wish, with guidance, of course. They are taught folk and ballet dancing.

Boys receive special training in music, apparent in their splendid band. Three bandmasters come at scheduled periods; one for drums, one for bugle, one for marching. Any youngster with special talent for drawing may attend the Rhode Island School of Design. Military drilling is provided for the older boys by Sergeant Joseph Cannon of the National Guard. Success in handicraft learned from their scoutmaster is particularly apparent in the construction work done at their camp, Camp Saint Russell. Here they helped in the building of two 80-foot docks, rolled and seeded land in preparation for the construction of their grotto, and helped with the landscape gardening.

Two large playrooms are provided for indoor recreation. Here the children play indoor games such as cards, ping pong, or roller skating, and even enjoy a television set. They are allowed to use the gym for basketball games. Often outside entertainers come; minstrels, musicals, parties, amateur shows, movies, birthday parties are enjoyed by the youngsters.

Outdoor recreational facilities are provided from many sources. All the children belong to the Boy and Girl Scouts according to their own units. Leaders sponsor camping and day trips. Then there are the picnic grounds, with an outdoor fireplace, holding almost limitless possibilities for fun. Camp Saint Russell is only a 20-minute ride away; here they can enjoy swimming and boating. Boys and girls are scheduled to go alternately; sometimes for a day, and in vacation time for a few weeks. Their playground is equipped with swings, slides, and sandboxes. But there are acres of room provided, too, for playing baseball, basketball, and tennis.

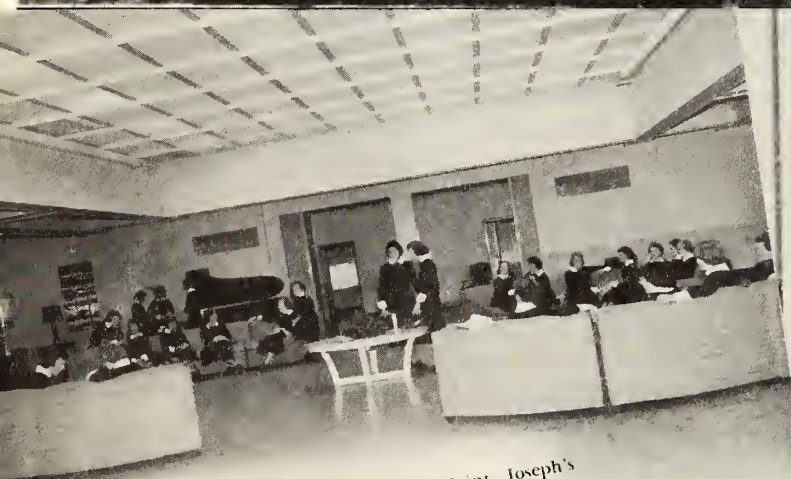
In conclusion, only a visit to the Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum to observe it in operation could ever convince an outsider of the marvelous work accomplished there. The very attitude of the children is an indication that they are normal, happy, well-adjusted, healthy individuals. Sisters are drawn to these youngsters because of the pricelessness of their immortal souls. They win the youngsters' confidence and affection by a sympathetic, kindly understanding, and a love that incorporates generosity, charity, and unselfish devotion. Group mothers and teaching Sisters work together to instruct, guide, and encourage the child. They recognize his need for respect, good standing, and success. The situation is as ideal as it can be outside the child's own home and parental care. The asylum in Rhode Island merits the reputation of being one of the best in the country.

Saint Mary's Academy, Bayview . . . 1874-1951

When the camera focussed its lens upon the new and modern Saint Mary's Academy, Bayview, it encompassed within its view three buildings. To the far left, it caught Saint Joseph's Hall, the residence building opened for occupancy in September of 1950; centrally located, the convent building completed in 1908, next met the camera's eye; to the right of this, the new Saint Mary's



St. Mary's Academy



Lounge and recreation room in Saint Joseph's Residence Hall . . .



Parents view the model home, part of the home economics department.



A double room in the residence hall.



Room in the home economics department furnished for cooking.



Bayview...1874=1951



A class in sewing and fitting



The shrine of Saint Joseph, patron of the residence hall.



Children love their dormitory quarters.



Sister reads a story to her group in the primary library.

Academy school building, one of the finest structures of its kind in New England. Here 1,000 pupils from pre-primary level through high school keep this building a busy place, indeed. By means of radio address system, Sister Mary Emeria, R.S.M., principal, can communicate at once with persons in the forty classrooms of the building.

Freshmen and sophomores may participate in such extra-curricular activities as the Glee Club, orchestra, basketball, dramatics, art, and journalism. Their names may be listed on the staffs of both *The McAuleyan Messenger*, the school paper, and *The McAuleyan*, Saint Mary's Academy annual. Home economics training is given to juniors and seniors only. These girls take sewing, cooking, and home management courses under expert guidance and with the best possible equipment. A model home, exquisitely furnished, is the most outstanding feature of the home economics department.

The auditorium, designed as a theatre, has sloping floor, sunken orchestra pit, complete stage lighting, and velour stage drapings. To effect excellent acoustics, its walls and ceilings are parabolic curves, carefully plotted. Seats are arranged in concentric curved rows so that every person in the audience will face the center of the stage. Here the Glee Club presents its annual operetta, the dramatics club its public performance, and guest artists hail it as an ideal auditorium.

Directly behind the stage, and on the same level, is the gymnasium with courts for basketball, badminton, and volley ball. Adjacent to it are the physical instructor's office, the locker and shower rooms, the first aid room.

Library facilities accommodate both high school and grammar school; each group has its own library. Adjoining the high school library are library work rooms and book storage rooms.

In the center of the third floor, near the chemistry and physics laboratories is the beautiful solarium, pride of the science department.

To the Sisters of Saint Mary's who accepted the inconveniences of inadequate facilities in the former quarters used for an increasing number of residents, Saint Joseph's Residence Hall is a dream come true. Arranged to provide for pupils from four to eighteen years of age, housing facilities include dormitories, double rooms, and single rooms for sleeping quarters. Lounges, snack rooms, washrooms, linen closets, rooms for the Sister in charge provide for the needs of the residents in every age group.

Opposite the main entrance of the residence hall, a beautifully furnished social hall, lounge, and playroom faces the broad terrace which overlooks the spacious grounds used for recreational purposes. Here provision is made for a motion picture projector and television antenna. Twelve stations throughout the building are connected with the central sound system. Thus radio programs, recorded music, or programs from the stage of the auditorium may be carried to the lounges, social hall, and dining rooms.

Service accommodations are situated on the ground floor of the residence hall. They include a students' dining room, the Sister's refectory, a dining

room for the employees, a fully equipped kitchen with refrigerators and adjacent store rooms. Cloak rooms, washrooms, and trunk room are located on this floor also.

Music studios, art studio, practice rooms, and parlors on the first floor complete the planning for every need of a resident pupil and under the kindly and motherly guidance of the Superior, Sister Mary Eusebius, R.S.M., and her Sisters, the children enjoy the comfort of home and the joy of friendships, at one and the same time.

Seventy-seven years ago, Mother Mary Bernard Read, who purchased the Howard mansion on Pawtucket Avenue as a boarding school for girls, could not have envisioned such development. Numbers were small, and its first directress, the beloved Sister Mary Juliana Purcell, mothered "young ladies" from five to eighteen years of age. In fact, one of the young ladies who entered Saint Mary's in that September of 1874 still lives today. She is Sister Mary Eulalia Quirk, R.S.M., a ninety-three year old Sister of Mercy. Then she was Anastasia Quirk, senior resident student who turned the key that opened the door to the first entrants.

Sister Mary Eulalia is the Institute's most treasured link with the history of Bayview. She can recall that the Academy gave two candidates to the religious life at the time of her graduation. Smiling gratefully as she reminisces, she remembers the second building erected in 1875, gift of the diocesan clergy. It contained a chapel, dormitory, and assembly hall. Nor did expansion stop here. So successful were these early teachers in inculcating Christian training and refinement of manners, that Bayview became the most exclusive school for resident students of its day. In 1884 a third large building was constructed, containing classrooms and auditorium.

So dear to her heart were the memories of the oldest building that her face saddens involuntarily as she mentions the fire of 1906, which practically destroyed the building for school purposes. The part of the original Howard mansion which remained unharmed was moved to the rear, henceforth to be used as the school library.

"The new convent building was Mother Mary Joachim's responsibility," Sister stated. "She was assisted incomparably by the late Monsignor Farrelly who supervised all the construction work. His interest was manifest in his daily visits during the period of building." Begun on November 21, 1905, the convent was ready for occupancy in 1908.

Vivid in the memory of every Rhode Island citizen is the tragedy of 1948 when fire completely destroyed the historic Bayview wooden buildings. Thus an act of God had made building imperative. In the interim, Right Reverend Thomas V. Cassidy, Superintendent of diocesan schools, with the school officials of the Town of East Providence came to the Sisters' assistance and saw to it that classes were not interrupted. Arrangements were made for the use of Brightbridge Elementary School, Riverside Junior High School, and for rooms in the Convent building.

Meanwhile, plans for new buildings evolved speedily. Within less than a year, on January 31, 1949, the new Saint Mary's Academy was ready for the largest enrollment in its history.

The names of all the early directresses of Bayview, Sister Mary Juliana, Sister Mary Liguori, Sister Mary Fidelis, and Sister Mary Albertus, Sister Mary Martina, Sister Mary Mauritia, and Sister Mary Tarcisius are remembered for valued service. To the present Principal, Sister Mary Emeria, and her faculty, high tribute is due for the successful carrying out of the ideals established by their competent predecessors.

Mother of Mercy Novitiate, Mount Saint Rita . . . 1927-1951

During the Revolutionary War period, George III, King of England, gave to one John Haskenn, Esquire, a grant of four hundred acres of land on Diamond Hill Road. He could not have known that he was thus cooperating with a Divine Providence Who had planned that this area should one day be known as Mount Saint Rita. Here would be the home of hundreds of young women who would in later years enter the Mother of Mercy Novitiate.

Since colonial days, of course, the property has passed through many hands. Haskenn's posterity divided the estate into parts, selling each to separate clients. Thus the portion now known as Mount Saint Rita was the former Fiske Homestead. Swift's, Whitney's, and Whiting's farms were further divisions of the original grant. Gradually, nearly all of the King's tract of land has been purchased by the Sisters of Mercy, and in 1927, the novitiate was moved from Saint Xavier's, Providence, to Mount Saint Rita, Cumberland.

Every year, on September 8 and on February 2, young women say good-bye to their parents, relatives, and friends and don the postulants' dress and cap. "Bands" or groups of postulants have been consistently increasing since 1927 when Mount Saint Rita first became their home. Postulancy is continued for six months. During this time, young women begin courses in education, become acquainted with the general program of the novitiate, are trained in religious decorum. They petition for the habit of a Sister of Mercy at the end of six months. Those who are accepted by the Mother Provincial and her Council prepare for the first ceremony, reception of the habit, by a "distant retreat" of two months and an immediate retreat of eight days. On their reception day, they are given the habit of the professed Sister, except for the veil which is white. They receive the name by which they will henceforth be known in religion.

The period of the novitiate is two years. The first year is called the canonical year and is devoted especially to the formation of the mind of the novice by means of the study of the Constitutions, by meditation and prayer, by instruction and study of the nature of the vows and virtues, and by suitable exercise in rooting out the germs of vice and in acquiring virtue. The spiritual training begun in the first year is continued throughout the second year of the novitiate. During the novitiate the novices are taught how to perform various domestic duties, skilled seamstresses teach them how to make the various parts of the religious habit. They learn to do the work of a sacristan, to make altar breads,

to care for all the ordinary charges in a religious house. Dependability, responsibility, purity of intention are stressed in the formation of their religious characters. During the first year they are permitted no secular branches of study, but teacher preparation is done with prudence and moderation during the second year of the novitiate.

First Profession occurs at the end of two and one-half years of this training. Then the novice receives the black veil and makes temporary vows for a period of three years. After profession, the Sisters continue classes and spend a period observing and doing practice teaching either in Mercymount, the laboratory school, or in diocesan parish schools.

Only after her vocation has been tested further by three years of temporary vows does the young woman make her perpetual vows. As a prelude to this final step, she returns to the novitiate for a two months' preparation for her retreat for perpetual profession.

Such, in brief, is the outline of training for a life of prayer, study, work, and recreation. It can in no way convey the spirit and beauty of the life the young women are learning to lead, the peculiar heroism of its early beginnings.

For these young religious present a challenge to the worldly-minded, just as the newness of religious life presents a challenge to themselves. A few years ago, they were just ordinary American girls, to all appearances, with youth's zest for pleasure. Today, they are learning to readjust their mental attitude and come to view life as a process of purification. They have begun to fight the difficult battle against self-love and to order that love to its only goal, God Himself.

"He that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it," Christ promised. Slowly the truth of this statement begins to assume bright reality. Morning meditation, office, daily Mass, examen, spiritual reading, adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, prayer, retreats, work, recreation, all come and go, teaching the novice to decrease in self-love and to increase in the love of Christ.

And she discovers that the energizing forces of her woman's nature are deeply satisfied, at peace. She is devoting herself to One Person, Christ. His interests are becoming hers, her perspective is broadening, His love interests become her own. The sympathy, tenderness, understanding, sensitiveness of her nature are being directed toward their proper object. Her instinct to mother and to teach thrives within the scope of her vocation. Through her study of Christ, her imitation of Mary, she is learning that virtue which is the soul of her whole life, humility, as it is worked out for her daily through submission to the will of God. She knows that, essentially, true love is a union of wills. Therefore, she studies to conform herself to the rule, to the orders of her superiors, as His expressed will. She finds further practice for her charity in her daily relationship with her Sister companions. She is on the way to complete union with Christ, and He is her Way.

Novices begin to realize the truth of Christ's words to Saint Catherine of Siena, "All the way to Heaven is Heaven, because I am the Way."

Mother of Mercy Novitiate,



Novices finish making the Way of the Cross.



Novices at sewing class.



Mother Mary Berenice, R.S.M., Mistress of Novices, gives instruction to the canonicals.



They chant the Office three times daily in choir.



Teacher training

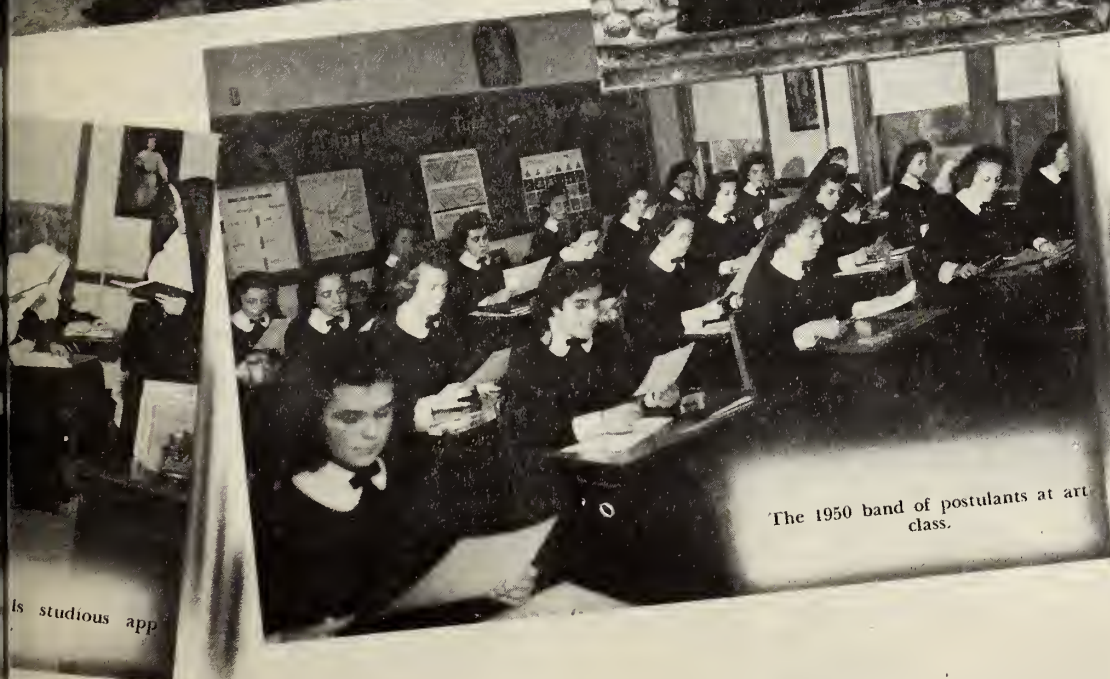
Mt. St. Rita... 1927-1951



Sister Mary Rosalind, S.M., R.N., is the resident nurse.



Public Rosary at Our Lady of Fatima shrine.



The 1950 band of postulants at art class.

is studios app

Belize, British Honduras, Central America . . . 1932-1951

Belize, the capital of British Honduras, Central America, became a part of the Province of Providence in April, 1932. Since that time, nineteen Sisters from this Province have given their services to this foreign mission. Five Sisters from Ireland who made their Novitiate at Mount Saint Rita are also stationed in Belize. Eleven young ladies from the mission have in turn entered our Mother of Mercy Novitiate to prepare for the religious life.

British Honduras is a strip of the Caribbean coastland under the government of Great Britain. The northern part is comprised of low, swamp land; the southern half is hilly and slightly mountainous. About 60,000 people dwell in the colony; half of them are negroes and mulattoes, a fourth Maya Indians and the majority of the remaining quarter are Spaniards and Mestizos. The English number a few hundred and there are a few Americans.

Workmen extract chicle from sapodilla trees, and also cultivate the banana and coconut plantations. In the forests are mahogany, rosewood, and cedar trees, valuable for their timber. The colony does not produce enough food even to feed itself.

Saint Catherine's Convent and Academy is built on flat terrain close to the waters of the Caribbean Sea. The Sisters' principal duty is teaching, a most important missionary work since the number of priests is limited. There would be little hope of Christian family life without the school. More than half the children in the colony are in Catholic schools; this means that lay teachers and Sisters teach 60 per cent of the entire school population. Three communities of Sisters are represented in the group of 54 Sisters who are engaged in education: the Mercy, Pallotine, and Holy Family communities of religious. Thirty Sisters of Mercy staff the secondary and grammar schools there.

For sixty-eight years, the Mercy Sisters have labored in the colony. Jesuit Fathers who were sent from Jamaica in 1851 to work with the Hondurans, appealed in 1879 for assistance to the Sisters of Mercy in New Orleans. Obstacles deferred immediate compliance with the new demand; the outbreak of yellow fever in Pensacola, the destruction by fire of the convent and school in Warrington. In 1883, Mother Austin Carroll and five Sisters left New Orleans for the new mission Belize.

The beauty of the approach and enthusiasm of the natives on the day of the Sisters' arrival, January 20, 1883, captivated the hearts of these early missionaries. Mother Austin Carroll wrote:

Birds, black, white and of variegated hues came out of the fragrant trees as if to bid the Sisters welcome. Clouds of silvery flying-fish darted from the laughing waves . . . The waters flashed every tint of the rainbow, and tiny islets called *cayes* appeared like bouquets in the ocean. The city . . . gleamed like an enormous gem in the setting sun. High above the tall houses, palm trees innumerable were nodding their feathery leaves against the sky. Where the land weds the sea, the mystical ring is a belt of coconut trees in the greensward . . .

The shores were covered to the water's edge with people of every age, and the bridge was literally black with human beings. As the Sisters stepped ashore, they began to move single file, along *living walls* to carriages ready to carry them to church. The variegated hues of complexion, the vivid colors of dress, the mingling of English, French, Spanish, Carib and other dialects . . . all made the scene unique.¹

Mother went on to recount the story of the welcome: the ringing of church bells, the procession of priests and acolytes to the church, the altar festively decorated in vines of pale yellow, the crowds present to receive them at their new convent. Here women kissed their hands, their crucifixes, women dressed in Spanish costume, Carib women with their babies strapped to their sides. After the banquet prepared for them, the Sisters were invited to explore their convent, furnished and made ready by Belize ladies. They rejoiced to see the statue of Our Lady of Guadeloupe high above the temporary altar.

Such was the sincerely warm welcome accorded the Sisters in a land which had been once Christianized by the Spanish. Missionaries had been exiled in 1821 when the people threw off the yoke of Spanish sovereignty and Great Britain assumed full governing power. Though the Faith did not entirely disappear, it became weak. Now the people showed their appreciation for these women who were to help them to guard that Faith and to teach it to their children.

Nor has the warmth of their devotion subsided with the years. Newcomers among our missionary Sisters are always impressed with the cordial attitude of these people. They celebrate Sisters' feast days by attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion on that day, sending them gifts and messages of congratulations.

They are impressed, too, with the simplicity and poverty of Hondurans. Though some possess moderate wealth—businessmen, bankers, those in the employ of the government—there is no so-called middle class, and the majority of the people are very poor. In their visits to the hospital, to the government home for the poor and afflicted, to the homes of the sick and the poor, and to the prisons, missionaries from the United States are appalled at the lack of sanitation, the poverty, and disease.

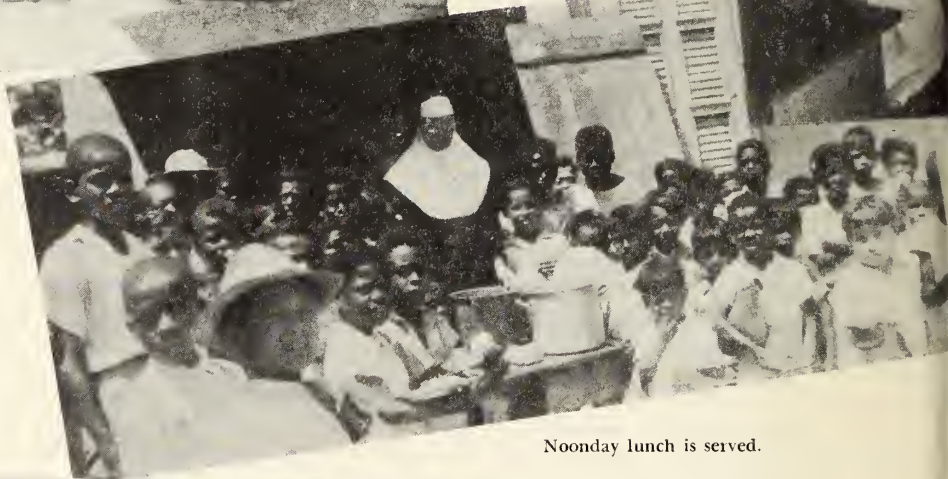
When New Orleans and Mobile were made two distinct dioceses in 1912, the consequent depletion of members made it impossible for the New Orleans community to continue to supply Sisters for Belize. The Sisters there were given a choice. Either they could remain in British Honduras as an independent community, or they could return to New Orleans. Mother Mary Stanislaus Donovan, Sister Mary Mercedes Manning, Sister Mary Ursula Manning, Sister Mary Louise McCabe, Sister Mary Teresa Martyn, and Sister Mary Zita Hardiman remained.

These six Sisters found the care of 500 children in their schools a herculean task, taxing their energy almost beyond endurance. Mother Mary Stanislaus

¹*Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, IV: 442-43.



Saint Catherine's Convent and Academy, built since the 1931 hurricane.



Noonday lunch is served.



En route to outlying mission districts.



Sister Mary Catherine's students display work in handicraft.

Sister Mary Rosella, R.S.M., first missionary from the Province of Providence, with her academy students.



Typing class at Saint Catherine's Academy.

Belize, British Honduras... 1932-1951



Good morning, Sister!



Sisters visit the sick poor at San Pedro.

sent out an appeal for postulants to Ireland and to the United States. In 1914, six postulants received the habit. Mother herself trained the novices, was superior of the convent and principal of the school. Attendance at schools increased, and in 1915, she planned the building of a new three-story convent. By 1919, the community numbered fifteen Sisters. Sister Mary Louise, principal of the Academy, succeeded in training a group of cultured and efficient young ladies, despite seemingly insurmountable handicaps. In 1920, Mother saw the necessity of including a business curriculum in the Academy, of expanding its accommodations to meet the increasing enrollment. She herself gave lessons in commercial subjects in the evenings after teaching all day in the Boys' School. In 1924, Mother provided for the erection of another three-story building. During all the days as an independent unit, Mother Mary Stanislaus was the soul of the community, her Sisters intrepid, animated by her heroic faith and zeal. Despite all difficulties, her community and its work prospered. She died in 1928, mourned by her Sisters and Christ's poor.

In the same year, the Jesuit Fathers opened in Mesopotamia, a swamp area, a new school named for Saint Ignatius. Two Sisters were assigned to teach the eighty children who first enrolled. In that year, too, the community in Belize petitioned to be admitted to the Union of the Sisters of Mercy in the United States of America. Mother Mary Carmelita Hartman, R.S.M., Mother General, visited the mission in April, 1931. Twelve hundred children were then under the supervision of twenty-eight Sisters. Mother General promised to do what she could to hasten their admission to the Union.

It would seem that the Belize community had already paid a high price for its devotion. Yet on September 10, 1931, this faith was again supremely tested. A hurricane devastated the city of Belize. Saint Ignatius School and Church collapsed, burning like a funeral pyre; the Convent of Mercy and its adjacent buildings were in ruins in a few hours. Yet enough of the convent was preserved to show that God meant that the Sisters' work should continue. This is what happened.

Amid the roar of the wind and waves, Sister Mary Teresa Martyn, R.S.M., superior, gave directions to assemble the children in a corridor of the convent. Several Sisters stayed with them, others hastened to the chapel to implore Divine assistance. The room began to sway, the altar rocked. Sister Mary Catherine Russell, R.S.M., unlocked the tabernacle, removed the Blessed Sacrament, ran to the corridor with her Treasure and placed it in the hands of the saintly superior, Sister Mary Teresa Martyn. Just as they left the chapel, it crashed to the ground. Sister began an urgent plea to Our Lord for help. "Lord, save us, we perish!" The old cry was once again mounting Heavenward. The superior intoned the *O Salutaris*, the Sisters and girls took it up, and while the storm raged and each portion of the house collapsed, the hymn reacted favorably upon them. Though fear held all in its grip, yet during the whole night, the Sisters and boarders remained in the corridor with the Master who protected them.

After the hurricane had subsided and the toll of the catastrophe taken, it was found that this corridor was the only place preserved intact. The priest who plowed his way through the wreckage feared to face the reality when he reached the convent next morning. He could only marvel at the evidence of Divine Providence when he found the Sisters and their charges safe in the Eucharistic Presence.

In the panic-stricken days which followed the awful disaster, stretcher-bearers carrying the dead were a familiar sight. The Sisters helped in nursing the wounded in the hospital and in their homes. They supplied care and food for the homeless sheltered in the Sodality Hall. The boarders were sent to their own homes, but the day students continued to receive instruction in the Sodality Chapel near Holy Redeemer School. Here, too, the pupils of Saint Ignatius School met for instruction until 1932 when a new building was ready for them. The Sisters lived in crowded uncomfortable quarters. A frame building was built as soon as a clearing could be made. This structure served until 1935 when the present Saint Catherine's Convent and Academy was erected.

If the Sisters of Mercy were appreciated in Belize until the time of this disaster, they were revered afterwards. So it was with genuine pride and gratitude to God that Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, R.S.M., then Mother Provincial, welcomed the Belize community into her province in 1932. It is to the glory of this charitable superior that she courageously offered her maternal care and guidance to her Sisters in British Honduras.

At the time, Belize afforded but few opportunities for teacher improvement, so it was decided that only Sisters having academic degrees would be sent. In turn, these Sisters would be able to aid the resident Sisters to meet the new demands of the local department of education. Accordingly, Mother General sent out a call for volunteers to all provinces in the Union. One thousand Sisters of Mercy responded to her appeal!

From this number, Mother General selected Sister Mary Eleanor McGrail, R.S.M., of Scranton and Sister Mary Rosella Cassidy, R.S.M., of Providence. After inspirational departure ceremonies in both provinces, the two Sisters first reported to the General Motherhouse in Bethesda, Maryland, before setting sail for Belize on August 26, 1933. Early on September 8, 1933, Belize shouted its welcome to the two Americans.

Saint Catherine's Academy, of course, was in an impoverished condition after the terrible disaster of 1931. It had just two rooms with folding doors between. The enrollment numbered twenty-six. With characteristic zest, these two Sisters set to work. Sister Mary Rosella, R.S.M., gave herself wholeheartedly to the reorganization of the high school departments into a regular four-year course including a commercial department.

During the eighteen years since Belize has been attached to the Providence Province, it has supplied Sisters who volunteer for a period of five years. American Sisters find many circumstances different and must adapt themselves to new customs in education, government, and everyday living.

The educational program is patterned on that of the English school system. Public schools are denominational in character, all supported financially by the British government. Schools operated under the sponsorship of the Catholics, Salvation Army, Methodists, and Anglicans are therefore termed public schools. At present, Sisters of Mercy teach in the Holy Redeemer Boys' School, the Holy Redeemer Girls' School, and in Saint Ignatius School. The scope of training here is equivalent to the American grammar school level, divided into six standards, according to the English system.

Seculars assist them, but the Sisters always teach religion classes. First grade registration reaches as high as 150; two seculars assist the religious in charge. There is no determined age for entrance into school, children from three to six years are placed in this first grade. The lunch program receives some assistance from the government. Dinner consists of rice and beans for which the children are taxed a penny a day.

Throughout the standards, pupils are supposed to supply their own books, the government pays the salaries of the teachers, the church provides the building. The ingenuity of the teacher is tested in cases where the poor have no means of providing for their own school supplies. Ordinary elementary school subjects are supplemented by classes in handicraft, very important in an area where children must learn to provide early for a means of livelihood. Wonderful results are obtained in sewing, weaving, woodcraft, and machine work. Advanced pupils learn to make hammocks, very practical knowledge in Belize.

At present conditions are crowded, the dark-skinned children are poor, teaching environment demands marked patience, high courage, and unflagging zeal. Sisters must make a daily trip to the opposite side of the city to teach at Saint Ignatius School. Yet they find part of their recompense in the hearts of these children, open to the love of Christian teaching, and eager for the message of the gospel. Are these Sisters more needed anywhere else? The need of these poor and neglected would set aglow the heart of any true Sister of Mercy.

Saint Catherine's Academy is a "select" school having pre-primary, six standards, and four years of high school. On the secondary level, the curriculum is planned according to the Cambridge system of examinations. In order to raise the standard of scholarship, the Sisters arranged for student participation in the Cambridge examinations for classical students, and in the London Chamber of Commerce examinations for commercial students. Curriculum includes religion, Latin, history, English grammar, English classics, Spanish, algebra, geometry, mathematics, shorthand, typing, and geography. Every student takes every subject every year.

High school sessions are conducted from 8 to 11:30 a.m., from 1 to 3 p.m. Four homerooms comprise the entire high school. Attendance averages about 40 to 45 girls in each room or approximately 180 students in all. Extra-curricular activities include sewing, compulsory for all freshmen and sophomores; singing every day for all from 11:30 to 12; dramatics is optional. Home economics is taught; the school has a paper, the *Ave Maria*, and a yearbook, *Mercedita*.

Tennis and basketball courts are provided and the girls may join the Girl Guides, a group similar to our Girl Scout organization. The Glee Club presents an annual operetta, a flourishing Sodality sponsors retreats and processions. An alumnae organization provides a scholarship to Saint Catherine's by means of a planned activities program.

Language presents little difficulty to missionaries since the official language of the Colony is English, though many speak Spanish or Creole, a combination of Spanish and English. Among Catholics, only three holy days are observed: Christmas, New Year's, and Corpus Christi. By a special indult given centuries ago to the early Spanish settlements, Catholics may eat meat on Friday. This permission has never been revoked. The Sisters must accommodate themselves to the diet of the colony: rain water for drinking purposes, canned or powdered milk all of the time; an abundance of fruits, and bread fruit which is fried and sweetened, producing a kind of pancake.

In addition to their class program, Sisters are engaged in other duties: catechizing, convert instruction, visitation of the poor in their homes, visiting hospitals and prisons. For these duties they find a knowledge of Spanish very useful, though not altogether necessary.

Several outlying missions receive attention from the Sisters during weekends or on school holidays. Catechism classes are conducted in Maskall, Santana, Burrell Boom, Bakers, Our Lady of the Wayside. Sister rings a huge bell to proclaim her arrival and children come running from the surrounding countryside to assemble in the "station", a church and school building. To the newcomer, the scene before her is a strange one. Children from five to sixteen years of age sit on long benches or stand in available places to hear her. Older boys and girls carry their baby brothers and sisters. Many children bring Sister a gift: flowers, fruit, or a squawking chicken carried head downward and tied by the legs.

Sister takes prayers, gives a general instruction, distributes medals and reading material. Then she dismisses the general group, keeping for special instruction the first communicants or those preparing for Confirmation.

Converts are made informally, so to speak, rather a result of visitation of the sick poor than of formal classes. The Sisters find a practical knowledge of nursing and of first aid indispensable in helping the sick. Doctors are not readily available, the poor could not afford their services if they were. Tuberculosis is the most prevalent disease.

Vacation time affords further opportunity for reaching the people at Ambergris Caye, sometimes called San Pedro. During the "dry season" of seven weeks beginning late in April, many leave Belize to save water and repair to the Cayes, islands with vacation houses and vats of water. San Pedro Caye, which almost touches Mexico, has a church, a schoolhouse, and a convent. A Jesuit lives in the school house for the vacation period. From there he goes to Mexico where he administers the Sacraments. The Sisters visit the poor, check on marriages, on Baptisms, and conduct a procession for the feast of Corpus Christi. These people are fisher folk. They are the poorest of the poor, live in thatched

Mount Saint Mary's faculty and student body.



Girls discuss sodality plans with their moderator.



Music is appreciated



Small classes mean individual attention.

Commercial department.



Caesar's brave colleagues.



Sister Mary Carmela, R.S.M., principal, discusses *Mercycrest* with its editors.



houses, have no roads, no means of conveyance, no doctors or nurses, no means of recreation. They love the Sisters as their only friends and anticipate eagerly the two weeks "vacation" time that these religious women spend with them.

Close to Saint Catherine's Convent is the prison of the colony. Sisters visit the men in their cells once a week, on Saturday afternoons. A sign beside the door of each cell gives the prisoner's name, his misdeed, and his religion. A guard pulls the bolt so that Sister may step inside, stays near while she talks to the inmate. The cell is small, long and narrow with no furniture.

If a prisoner's sentence is a long one, he has a cot. There is a window, a small shelf on which to place his food, tea and bread. Wonderful stories are recounted of the magnificent work done by the Sisters in behalf of these men. Some are converted to Catholicism, others repent of their crime and return to the Sacraments, still others learn resignation and offer their prison term in reparation for their sins. Those who must face capital punishment, death by hanging, are strengthened by the prayers of the Sisters who sometimes accompany the men to the gallows.

One of Saint Catherine's Academy girls summed up the heroism of the Sisters in a tribute which could well be applauded to the echo. She wrote:

Their work is indeed a golden period of love and sacrifice in the history of Belize. They are invaluable to this mission where they have labored. Laughing with us in our joy, and grieving with us in our sorrow—they are our sisters in truth. And as every nation and country looks up to its heroes and heroines, we also in this little mission have our heroines. Who are they? Our heroines are the Sisters of Mercy!²

Mount Saint Mary's Academy, Fall River, Massachusetts . . . 1946-1951

When the Most Reverend Bernard O'Reilly invited the Sisters of Mercy to come to Providence in 1851, his See included the territory that now comprises the Diocese of Fall River. Several parochial schools were opened in Fall River and in New Bedford and the Sisters also staffed Saint Joseph's Hospital in New Bedford. This hospital was later closed because there was such a demand for the Sisters in the schools.

In 1904, the Diocese of Fall River was founded consisting of a large portion of southern and eastern Massachusetts. In 1905, the Sisters of Mercy formed a new Community in the Fall River diocese and their motherhouse was to be in the Episcopal City of Fall River. Land was purchased at Second and Middle Streets for the site of the new motherhouse and work began immediately on the plans. In 1910 the wing, now Mount Saint Mary's Academy, was completed, and the Sisters took formal possession of their new convent in that year.

In the fall of 1914, work was begun on the middle section and corresponding wing. The building as it stands today was completed in the summer of 1917. The chapel at Mount Saint Mary's is a gem of Gothic architecture with exquisite carved woodwork and beautiful stained glass windows each depicting

²Woods, Dorothy, "The Heroines of British Honduras" quoted in Sister Mary Herbert's dissertation, *The Sisters of Mercy in Belize*.

a scene in Our Lady's life from Her Presentation in the Temple to Her crowning as Queen of Heaven.

The Sisters continued as an independent community until 1929 when they heeded the voice of our Holy Father and voted to join other communities of Sisters of Mercy to form a general government in the United States. Fall River and Providence were united once again and became the present Province of Providence. At this time the novitiate at Mount Saint Mary's was closed and the novices were moved to the novitiate of the Province at Mount Saint Rita.

For some time, His Excellency, the Most Reverend James E. Cassidy, D.D., Bishop of Fall River, was distressed that the academies for girls were so crowded that it was impossible for many girls in the city of Fall River to receive a Catholic High School education. Finally, in 1945, he proposed to Mother Mary Matthew, R.S.M., that she open an academy at Mount Saint Mary's. Mother agreed to the proposal and steps were taken to renovate one wing of the convent building to meet the building requirements of state and city laws. Laboratories were equipped, a beautiful library furnished, the auditorium converted into an auditorium-gymnasium, and several large well-lighted classrooms were provided for the use of the first students who entered Mount Saint Mary's Academy in September, 1946.

Sister Mary Carmela Corbett was appointed the first principal and she was assisted by Sister Mary Alberta Quinn. The first year only the freshmen were admitted, sixty of them. Each year, one class was added until the high school schedule was complete. There are now over two hundred girls in the four high school classes with a faculty of eleven members.

Mount Saint Mary's offers the regular classical, commercial and scientific courses of all standard high schools. There are many extra curricular activities to provide scope for the varied interests of the students. Glee Club, dramatics, basketball, Sedes Sapientiae Book Club, and an art club are some of the opportunities offered by the Academy.

Our Lady's Sodality, which was established at Mount Saint Mary's shortly after the opening, is the heart of school life and every girl considers membership in its ranks a signal honor. The sodality program calls for mission activities and spiritual and temporal projects suggested by the members. The Most Reverend James E. Cassidy appointed Reverend James Gerard as the first Spiritual Director of the Sodality. So well has he inspired the girls with the ideals of Mary that seven of the first graduating class of fifty-four heeded the Master's call to follow Him in the way of perfection. Surely God has set His seal of approval on the first masterful strokes of an educational masterpiece.

This success is due, under God, to the unceasing devotion of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop Cassidy, who from the very beginning has brought rich blessings to the Academy through his generosity, zeal, and encouragement.

Salve Regina College . . . 1947-1951

Nineteen fifty-one is a year of double significance for Salve Regina College. Its first commencement will coincide with the hundredth anniversary of the

Sisters of Mercy in Rhode Island. On June 4, 1951, fifty young women will receive their degrees from the State's youngest institution for higher learning.

News wires of the Associated Press released the story of its opening on September 21, 1947. Across the country, they featured Mr. and Mrs. Robert Goelet, owner of the famous Goelet Estate at Ochre Court, Newport, who had given their beautiful summer home to the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough, D.D., Bishop of Providence, that it might be used for educational purposes. In turn, the Bishop proposed that the deeds be transferred to the Sisters of Mercy for the long desired Catholic college for women.

Accepting the estate with deep gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Goelet and to the Bishop, Mother Mary Matthew, Mother Provincial and Mother Mary Hilda, Mother Assistant Provincial, formulated plans for opening the college in the following September. In July of 1947 they announced the first faculty, with the Mother Provincial as President and Sister Mary James O'Hare, former principal of Saint Xavier's Academy, as Dean. The initial enrollment totalled fifty-eight students.

In 1948, Mr. and Mrs. Goelet made another gift to the college. They donated real estate and a building on a tract of land about one block from the college. This building, now known as Mercy Hall, serves as a dormitory and contains a gymnasium and laboratories for the science and home economics departments.

Mr. Cornelius C. Moore, Newport attorney and chairman of the Advisory Board of the College, donated the former Adrienne Gilbert estate to Salve Regina College as a foundation gift for the centennial campaign begun in November, 1950. The property, adjacent to Mercy Hall, is now used as a dormitory and known as Moore Hall. Mr. Moore conveyed this munificent gift in memory of his parents.

Salve Regina College offers the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science in Nursing. The curriculum requires sixty-eight or seventy hours of prescribed courses: theology, English, history, philosophy, science of mathematics, and a foreign language. Remaining credits necessary for a degree may be obtained by pursuing courses in each student's field of concentration and by taking electives in related subject matter. Students may major in languages, literature, and the fine arts; in mathematics, and the natural sciences; or in the social sciences. Young women who desire a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing must spend two years at the college with two summers and two years at Saint Joseph's Hospital, Providence, and affiliated schools.

To announce and reward young women who rank in the highest tenth of their class, an Honors Convocation is held annually. Beginning with morning Mass, celebrated by the Most Reverend Bishop, this ceremony continues on the terrace where the Dean's list is read in the presence of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop, the Mother Provincial, the college faculty, and student body. The young women highest on the Dean's list from each class receive fourrageres insignia. These shoulder knots are worn on special days such as cap and gown day or on ring ceremony day. It has been the privilege of the

students to receive this honor from His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop McVinney, at each ceremony.

Among the student organizations at the college, the Sodality of Our Lady ranks first in importance. Its program follows that formulated by the Central office of the Sodality at Saint Louis. The officers attend the Summer School of Catholic Action. Activities include support of the Missions, devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Fatima Club who say the Rosary at 10 p.m. in the chapel, a party for children at Christmas time, and a special project of the literature committee—each freshman donates a book to the college library.

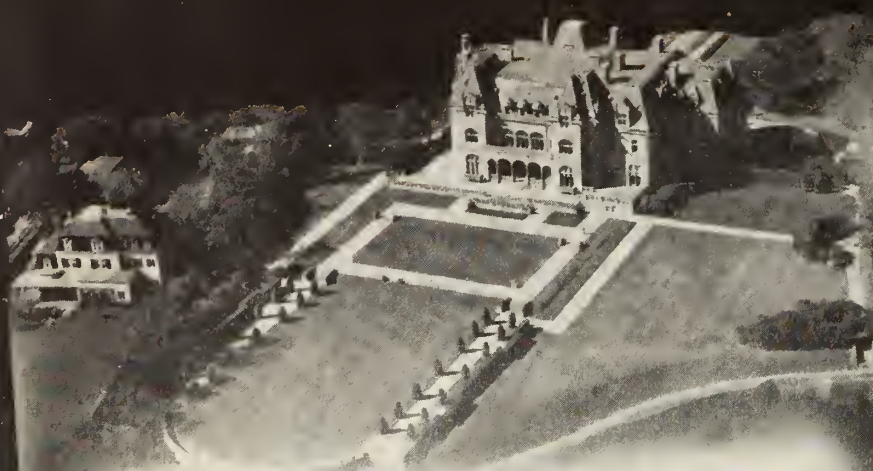
Co-operating with the faculty in maintenance of rules and regulations, the Student Government Association is the official voice of the student body. The scope of its activity extends to national student life by affiliation with the National Federation of Catholic College Students. Membership in this latter organization functions under the International Relations Club. Students from Salve Regina College have attended all national and regional meetings. In 1949-50 Miss Jane Mycroft, '51, was Vice-president of the regional organization. At present, the College is sponsoring an important project of the NFCCS. It has admitted two Chinese students whose scholarships and maintenance are financed by the IRC and by the college. Further affiliation with student groups is achieved by membership in the New England Catholic Students Peace Federation, in the United States National Student Association, and in the Collegiate World Affairs Council of Rhode Island.

Meeting weekly, the workshop in dramatics is conducted by Carol P. Dunton, A.B., who trains the members of the club known as the Regina Players. One public performance has been given, "Letters to Lucerne", and several performances at the college.

Attesting to their splendid training, the Queen's Choristers, members of the Glee Club, have met with men's glee clubs from Providence College, Boston College, and Manhattan College in joint concerts which produced superb musical entertainment.

French and Spanish clubs provide weekly practice in conversation. The Home Economics Club gives a tea once a week to different groups, to the commuters, to the chaplain.

Social events supply the necessary balance for a full scholastic program. Interclass teas, parties, and treats make for broader acquaintanceship among the college students themselves. The Court Cotillion, Neptune's Folly, Moonlight Masque, Sapphire Ball, and Junior Prom create opportunities for making new friendships outside the college. Cap and gown investiture and ring ceremonies inject a note of solemnity into social activities. To enhance the lecture program, authorities in fields of cultural interest address students at convocations during the year. Such men as Frank O'Malley, professor of English at Notre Dame, Paul Van K. Thomson, professor of English at Providence College, Albert J. McAloon, Prevention co-ordinator, Michael Dorizas of the University of Pennsylvania, and Brassil Fitzgerald, professor of English at Stonehill College, have enriched their audiences with thoughts of lasting interest and importance.



Salve Regina College... 1947 1951

Mrs. Robert Goelet who donated her estate at Ochre Court to be used for educational purposes.



Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D., His Excellency Most Reverend Amleto G. Cicognani, D.D., Apostolic Delegate, are welcomed to the college by Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., Mother Provincial, Mother Mary Matthew, R.S.M., and Sister Mary James, R.S.M., Dean.



One of Merc



May procession on the ocean front.



Study time's

Moore Hall, the former Adrienne Gilbert Estate, donated as a Centennial gift to the College by Mr. Cornelius C. Moore, Newport attorney.



Students learn the art of cookery.



Students greet the Honorable John O. Pastore, then Governor of Rhode Island.



Hall's homey corners.



Refreshing pause.



Sister Mary James, R.S.M., Dean, greets the Queen of the Missions.

Daily Mass and the observance of the ceremonies of the liturgical season take place in the chapel at the college, where the Eucharistic Presence is the heart of its spiritual life. An annual three-day retreat, a day of recollection, and a monthly Holy Hour conducted by Reverend Gerald Dillon, chaplain, are part of the religious program.

Training in student journalism is provided by work on student publications, *Ebb Tide*, the monthly paper, and on the college annual, *The Regina Maris*. A college bulletin is now in its third volume, and a small handbook for students contains the Constitution of the Student Government Organization, academic and general regulations.

To assist Salve Regina College financially in its renovation, expansion, and general progress, Salve Regina College Guild has been organized. Over two thousand Catholic women are numbered in its roster. Mrs. Frank Fogarty was elected first president of the guild and retained her office during the year 1948-49. For the years 1949-50, Miss Rosalind West was president, and in 1950-51, Miss Esther Reilly performs that office.

Speakers of note are engaged for its four annual meetings. Salve Regina College plays hostess to guild members three times a year at a bridge, a high tea, and a musicale. Remarkable leadership and splendid co-operation have resulted in the Guild's offering munificent gifts to the college.

Salve Regina College, though young and necessarily lacking traditions, has achieved much in four short years. Organization of curriculum, activities, and social life has been rapid, thorough, and Christocentric. The college promises to graduate young women who will enrich their environment religiously, mentally, and culturally.

Mercymount Country Day School . . . 1948-1951

For several years, requests were made repeatedly to the Sisters of Mercy that they open a school at Mount Saint Rita, but it was not until the spring of 1948 that this long cherished desire finally became an accomplishment.

In March, 1948, the Aldrich Estate adjoining Mount Saint Rita property was purchased and plans for remodelling the main building into bright, sunny classrooms were made immediately. In September of that year, Mercymount Country Day School, as the new school was to be known, opened its doors to welcome the first pupils, seventy-two boys and girls from Cumberland and from the surrounding towns of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. They were registered for the pre-primary and for grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. Sister Mary Pierre Donnelly, R.S.M., was named the first principal of Mercymount and she was assisted by a faculty of two Sisters, Sister Mary Noella Departhy, R.S.M., and Sister Mary Rosanne Quirk, R.S.M. Today, Mercymount's third year, there are two hundred twenty pupils and seven Sisters on the faculty. Each year, there has been one grade added, and teachers and pupils are looking forward to the first graduation in June, 1952.

Mercymount Country Day School offers its students a regular primary and elementary school program of studies. Classes begin at 9 a.m. and close at 3 p.m.

Dinner is served at noon in the bright sunny cafeteria. The beautiful, spacious campus, fully-equipped with modern recreational facilities, provide the children with many opportunities for enjoying the invigorating fresh air and sunshine so necessary for the building of a healthy body.

Since its beginning, Mercymount has played a leading role in all church and civic undertakings. A delegation wearing the regulation school uniform of blue and white always forms a special unit in the procession honoring Our Lady of Fatima at the annual pilgrimage held at Mount Saint Rita. Each year in May, the lovely statue of Our Lady on the school campus, gift of the Mercymount Mothers' Club, is crowned by one of the first girls enrolled in the school. On that day, Mary is lovingly honored as the Queen of the May, and is enshrined by all the students as Queen of their hearts. When the beautiful "Pilgrim Virgin" honored Mount Saint Rita by a visit in the spring of 1950, the entire student body paid her its homage by offering flowers at her shrine, by acting as a bodyguard, and by assisting devoutly at the services arranged in honor of the Queen of Heaven.

In the *Providence Visitor* Press Crusade of 1950, Mercymount won the coveted prize, the *World Book Encyclopedia*. This prize was offered by Mr. Robert L. Smith of Pawtucket to the school showing the largest percentage of gain over the previous year's rating.

The students of Mercymount have always been quick to make little sacrifices to assist those in distress, and their generous, ready sympathy showed itself at its best when fire destroyed a large part of the Abbey of Our Lady of the Valley. When all the carefully hoarded pennies were counted, a gift of \$76.00 was ready to be presented to the Abbot, the Very Reverend Dom Edmund Futterer, O.C.S.O. Three little girls from the first grade presented the gift to the Abbot. Carefully tucked away in the school's archives is a very precious document, the following letter of thanks from the Very Reverend Abbot to the Sisters and children of Mercymount:

March 30, 1950

Dear Sister and all the little ones,

What joy you have brought to our hearts during these days of trial! Our beautiful Church has gone and many other good things, which the good God gave to us. He has taken them away now and we should not complain, but like Job, bless and praise our Heavenly Father in all His works. He did not cause the fire directly, but He allowed it for some greater good, which we do not see now. But we must believe! We must hope! And above all, we must love God with all our beings.

It is wonderful that you were able to get together so much money for the monks, whom you all love. It was a great surprise when three of the little girls came themselves with the gift and told us how truly their hearts and those of all of you were with us. We shall never forget you for your sincere love of our community. You shall all have a special place in the hearts and prayers of all the monks. May God bless you all and may Our Mother Mary protect you all. Keep on praying for us. With a big blessing,

In the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

✠M. EDMUND FUTTERER, O.C.S.O.

Mercymount Country Day School...

1948-1951



Stephen Habeshaw, first registrant at Mercymount.



Industrious pre-primary group at lesson time.



Statue of Our Lady and Child, gift of the Mercymount Mothers' Club.



At dismissal time.



Reverend Joseph Bracq, editor of the *Providence Visitor* and Sister Mary Pierre, R.S.M., principal, congratulate Anne Bradley, winner of the *World Book Encyclopedia*.



Sleepy pre-primary group at siesta hour.



With each new school year, Mercymount's enrollment increases.



Ham Radio Operator

Mercymount Country Day School also serves as a laboratory school for Mercy College of Education, the Normal College of Mother of Mercy Novitiate. Here the young Sisters spend that part of their training period allotted to observation and practice teaching.

Shortly after the founding of Mercymount, the mothers of the pupils organized a club, the Mercymount Mothers' Club. From the very beginning, the organization has flourished and has manifested a magnificent spirit of co-operation with the Sisters in endeavoring to provide the financial means necessary to enlarge the present building and thus to cope with the problem of growth and expansion that has manifested itself so early in the history of the school.

Mercymount bids fair to take its place as one of the leading private schools of the diocese and there is only one murmur of complaint to be heard from Sisters and from parents who desire to have their children enjoy the opportunities it affords: "Mercymount is too small".

In May of 1948, still another piece of property adjacent to Mount Saint Rita was purchased, Highland View Farm. This estate consists of a large farmhouse, barn, several smaller buildings, and approximately 200 acres of land. Up to this time, the estate has not been used, but the present hope is to convert it into a high school for girls to be ready to receive Mercymount's first graduates.

Ham Radio Operator: Teacher of Industrial Arts

Perhaps there is no better illustration of the Sisters' adaptability to the ever-increasing demands of the age than the work of Sister Mary Emiliana, R.S.M. For seventeen years she was the only nun to hold an amateur radio operator's license. She now shares the honor with Sister Charlotte, a Holy Cross nun who received her license during the past year. However, Sister Mary Emiliana is the only woman teacher of Industrial Arts in the schools of Rhode Island.

Her talent for the mechanical was developed under both these aspects for the sake of the boys whom she teaches at Tyler School. For twenty-five years, Sister Mary Emiliana has taught the many phases of carpentry and cabinet making to youngsters from the fifth through the eighth grades. At first these groups were referred to as classes in "sloyd," a Swedish word meaning "skill." Sister taught "sloyd" to the fathers of many of her present pupils.

"That we can correlate religion with industrial arts may be a surprise to some," Sister agrees. "But when we consider that the Divine Architect chose to be a carpenter, it becomes easy to make the association."

Wearing a smock over her habit, Sister moves among her boys each day explaining the use of tools, making suggestions, guiding their work. To fifth graders, she teaches the use of the spokeshave in the making of wheels for a wagon. Children of this age even learn the use of power tools. Lathe turning begins in the sixth grade. Boys make rocking toys for the younger members of their families. Seventh-graders learn to make rabbit joints. To grade eight, Sister teaches the mortise and tenon joint when boys make small tables. They learn to carve patterns on wood surfaces at this time. Ninth graders devote their full period to drafting.

"The ability to read blueprints is no burden to carry," Sister believes. "Many a man has regretted his inability to do so."

When Sister begins to list the many things boys can make after they have learned the essentials of woodwork, one realizes what wonderful creativeness such a course fosters. Sister herself holds that "it is an integral part of the educational scheme. It is both cultural and aesthetic. It is neither disciplinary nor a means of preparing a boy for a trade."

"We have made beautiful and useful articles," Sister continues, "tables, hope chests, low boys, model boats, stools, picture frames, trays, desk sets, book ends, salad bowls, and wagons. We finished a miniature grandfather's clock, scaled from the regular size; there was not a nail in it." During the hurricane year, the boys built a 17-foot launch which withstood the hurricane though the house near it was torn from its foundations.

During the war, boys built radio cabinets for the Providence Police Mobile Radio Patrol, which consisted of radio amateurs. From the making of cabinets, their interest in radio grew. In order to keep pace with her pupils' needs, Sister Mary Emiliana studied radio. She learned the code, sat at her complicated apparatus in a small conservatory in Saint Xavier's Convent, and learned to receive and send out messages. When she was sufficiently versed in her subject, Sister went to the Federal Communications Commission's office in Boston where she passed an examination, entitling her to an amateur radio operator's license.

That was seventeen years ago. Today, Sister is still enthusiastic about her radio operating. She converses easily about crystal oscillators, code practice, radio law, short waves, and transmitters. She has contacted nearly every State in the Union and now aims to "work all continents." She has conversed with ham operators in Great Britain, Iceland, Scotland, Italy, Puerto Rico, and British Honduras.

Sister files records of all calls in her log book. Hams verify their conversations with postcards identified with their call letters—Sister's are WIHUUH at the convent, and WISHR at the Tyler School. During World War II, hams were required to register with the government and were mobilized for emergency action. Sister holds a certificate from the Rhode Island State Council of Defense. It reads: "for faithful service rendered as a member of the United States Citizens Defense Corps, the State of Rhode Island awards Rev. Sister Mary Emiliana, R.S.M., Providence Police Mobile Radio Patrol, the 500 hour Service Bar." It is signed by J. Howard McGrath, then Governor of Rhode Island.

Not only has Sister sought to interest her own classes in radio, but she has tried to influence a wider audience as well. Her article, "Calling All Boys" appearing in *Catholic Youth*, November, 1945, encourages boys and girls to begin amateur radio operating. She writes:

"Sit at your operating table, tap a key, call CQ—and someone, perhaps in Africa, answers you . . . before the night is over, you may have talked with persons in three continents! . . . We hear a great deal today about world friendship. The amateur has been promoting this for years. His friendships are global . . ."

Yes, Sister Mary Emiliana, R.S.M., really believes that radio has part of the answer to world unity—if it is linked with the service of God.

Visitation of the Needy

Besides their teaching duties, Sisters of Mercy actively engage in the visitation of the sick in their homes and in hospitals. In the parishes of the diocese, the Sister is a welcome visitor in the homes of people who need her counsel, her prayers for the dying. Authorities of non-sectarian hospitals readily permit Sisters to visit patients, talk with them, distribute reading material or any religious article a patient may request.

This visitation has been extended to include the State Institutions, also. Once a week, Sisters perform works of mercy for the inmates of the prison, the men's reformatory, the State Infirmary, the women's reformatory, the State Hospital and Oaklawn.

At the present time, in the prison and men's reformatory, instruction and interviewing of the men is done by the chaplains appointed for the work. Here the Sisters care for the altars and priest's vestments. They help to supply the chaplain with reading material and rosary beads for distribution among the prisoners.

At the State infirmary, Sister assembles a group in the chapel, leads the Rosary for them, gives a short instruction. The chronic sufferers are here—cancer patients, epileptics, the blind, the incurables. Here also are the homeless aged, the friendless. They look forward to the weekly visits of the Sisters and assemble in the chapel an hour or more before their arrival. The journey from the wards is rather a long one along a bleak stone corridor. Often patients assist one another to make it; a blind person might push a wheelchair while its occupant steers carefully to the chapel. They listen attentively to Sister's talk on the efficacy of suffering in atonement for sin, on the love God has for them, and on the concern of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as revealed at Fatima. Sister does not neglect to brighten their day with simple human joys in the form of small gifts or perhaps some candy or reading material. After chapel services, the Sisters visit the bed-ridden.

During May there is a crowning ceremony; at one time a trembling little old lady tottered up to the statue of Our Lady to "crown." She later confessed that she had longed all her life to have this honor. Choral groups from Saint Xavier's Academy and from Saint Mary's, Pawtucket, carol at Christmas time, much to the genuine delight of the audience.

Devotion to Our Lady is stressed particularly at Sister's instructions in the Women's Reformatory. Again, the May procession and crowning touches all hearts. At one time when lots were drawn for the honor, it fell to a young woman who had just promised Our Lady she would go to confession. She was convinced that Our Lady herself had selected her. There was not a dry eye in the room on the day the crowning took place. Tears streamed down the young woman's

cheeks as with radiantly peaceful countenance, she reverently placed the crown on the statue. Many of the women's hearts were softened as they watched. The Sisters prepared a large number for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance on that afternoon.

Sometimes converts are made under odd circumstances. For a particular favor Sister had done for one rotund lady, the latter promised seriously, "And next week, Sister, when you come, I will teach you how to do the Boogie Woogie." The others, horrified, hastened to explain to her that Sisters would have no use for such knowledge. Although Sister laughed, the incident bothered the woman until the following week. She met Sister at the door, all concern and apology. "I didn't mean no harm, Sister . . ." Sister reassured her. "Can I come to your chapel to sing?" the woman persisted, probably deciding that Sister would consider this an act of reparation for her offense. She went to sing, stayed to pray, soon asked to be instructed and was baptized, Mary. Sister never did learn Boogie Woogie.

Oaklawn, house of correction for teen-agers, is the Sisters' last visitation at the State Institutions. The hand of mercy is outstretched to these young people, and again the Sisters try to give them Christ through Mary. They supplement instruction with impressive pageants and tableaux on Our Lady, her life, her virtues, her message at Fatima.

Through these Sisters of Mercy, "the shade of His Hand is outstretched caressingly" to poor unfortunates who are drifting downstream to an eternity of misery. Social agencies can do much good, but they can never make the same appeal to the hearts of these women who reverence and trust a nun. To them, she stands for the gentleness and forbearance of the Mother of Mercy . . . coming to all who need her Son.

Religious Leadership

In thus reviewing all the works carried on by the Sisters during the century just passed, one cannot but reflect on the very great blessings that God has granted to the members of this Community in their labors for His glory. One of the chief blessings bestowed on the Providence Community in a human way is the excellent leadership and inspiration of higher superiors. Perhaps none have been more alert to the interests of Christ in their Sisters, or more provident for them in the light of present-day needs than Mother Mary Hilda Miley, R.S.M., Mother Provincial, and Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, R.S.M., Mother Assistant Provincial. These two Religious have planned and worked conjointly since 1916 in the administration of the Providence Community and of the Province of Providence.



MOTHER MARY CATHERINE MCAULEY
Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy

CHAPTER TWO

The Woman We Love

CATHERINE McAULEY, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy now dead but one hundred ten years, continues to affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in every quarter of the globe. This influence is in keeping with her beautiful and amazing life story. There is a timelessness about Catherine McAuley. For not only does her spirit still continue to bear abundant fruit in our day, but in her own, she was visionary, ahead of her time.

A few years ago, one of our Sisters visited a classroom of children in the Bush, Central America. The natives, surprised into a greeting to the stranger, rose and warmly chorused, "Good morning, Mother McAuley!" Though the error was soon corrected by the much flattered, if embarrassed visitor, it brings out a cogent fact. The name of Catherine had penetrated into areas where radio, motion picture, and television could not have carried it.

No one would be more surprised at this than Mother Catherine herself. For if one fact stands out more forcefully than any other in the story of this charming Irish lady, it is this. She most certainly never set out to establish a community of religious women or to carry her own sphere of influence beyond Dublin, her native city.

Had she been told in her youth that when she was nearly fifty years of age she would be learning the rudiments of conventual life in a novitiate, she would have been at least incredulous. Catherine had no thought, then, of nuns or of their ways.

No one would have been more amazed than she to hear the words spoken a hundred years later by the Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi. "To no small degree the Church in the United States owes it to the Sisters of Mercy that it has been able to maintain its parochial schools. Besides this, they have extended their charity to the sick not only in hospitals but also in their own homes; and have shown true Christian charity to the poor forsaken ones of this world, the orphans, the feeble, and the aged."¹

The Institute of Our Lady of Mercy is clearly the work of God, an *opus Dei*. Catherine had no clear-cut vision of her life-work. Yet from her earliest youth she was being prepared for the tremendous achievement that was hers. Born in 1781² at Stormanstown House, Dublin, she was the daughter of a prosperous craftsman, James McAuley. Undoubtedly, she inherited his forceful character,

¹Costello, Sister Mary Loretto, R.S.M., *The Sisters of Mercy of Maryland*, p. 218.

²Savage, Roland B., S.J., *Catherine McAuley*, p. 6. Throughout this chapter I have used the latest life of the foundress because it is more completely documented than other existing works. In its appendix, the author presents specific data to substantiate his findings.

his constructive ability, and his astonishing courage. Her mother, a charming, sweet young woman of vacillating character, moved in a society circle thoroughly Protestant after her husband died.

At seventeen, after her mother's death, Catherine went to live with her uncle, Owen Conway. In this household, she had a brief taste of what Catholic homelife could mean. Although she had received her first Communion from Dr. Murray and had been confirmed by Archbishop Troy, Catherine's religious training could scarcely be called thorough. Through Anne Conway, she met a certain Father Andrew Lube who instructed her in Catholic doctrine and befriended her in later doubts and difficulties.

Within a year, Mr. Conway suffered financial reverses which reduced him from prosperity to penury. Catherine then had her first experience with actual poverty. She shared the frugal rations of the Conways when often the only meal was a little bread in the evenings.

Her brother and sister had gone to live with one William Armstrong when Mrs. McAuley died. Now he invited Catherine to share his home. Here was the environment chosen by God to strengthen her faith. Mr. Armstrong was a rabid Protestant, who took up the work of proselytizing Catherine. He had already done this to her brother and sister, but found in Catherine a gentle but firm resistance.

When scarcely eighteen years of age, Catherine was thus put under the necessity of defending doctrine she understood but very imperfectly. Lengthy scriptural arguments were propounded to her against the Real Presence and the Mass, particularly. Her conflict here was a very real, torturous and soul-searching one. Recognizing the moral worth of these people who had befriended her, she was loath to cause them pain by her unwillingness to yield. She sensed, too, the evident good faith in which they presented these long and erudite arguments.

Her mind was tortured. Were they perhaps right after all? Because she could find no answers to some of their questions, she was forced to keep silence. Yet the seed of doubt had been sown. In her difficulty she consulted Reverend Thomas Betagh. Willingly, dexterously, thoroughly, he allayed her doubts, disclosed the fallacies in their arguments and opened to her the treasures of Catholicism. Though Catherine remained for twenty years in a Protestant environment, she fervently adhered to her hard-won faith. The spiritual doctrine of firm confidence in God which she was later to stress with her Sisters had its deepest roots, perhaps, in this experience.

Nor was her defense of the Faith to end in the Armstrong household. William Callaghan and his wife, frequent visitors there, invited Catherine to live with them. She accepted, becoming their adopted daughter at Coolock House. Mrs. Callaghan, a Quaker, approved of Catherine's first manifested interest in the poor of the village; she provided the young woman with money to help these underprivileged people. Though the Callaghans never interfered with her Faith, they heartily disapproved of it. Deprived of the waters flowing from the full tide of Catholic life, Catherine attended Mass as frequently as possible;

but for the rest, it was a steadfast, unobtrusive strengthening of her union with God in solitude that was thus forced upon her. Here she was formed by Him for the astonishing work she was to do in her last years.

Years later at the ceremony of dedication of the first chapel to Our Lady, Mother of Mercy, Dr. Blake said of Catherine,

"Her heart overflows with the charity of Jesus, whose all consuming love burns within her."³ Surely in these quiet peaceful days at Coolock House, she nurtured that flame. It was perhaps, for her, the beginning of contemplation. She fasted rigorously during Lent and Advent, abstaining from food or drink from Holy Thursday to Holy Saturday.

As Catherine began to share more in the life of Christ, she found herself wanting, too, to do the work that was His own, to share His interests. The poor had an irresistible attraction for her; and evidently, they found her charming, too. Her servants and children of the village benefited not only by her munificence in a material way but, from her, learned the gospel Christ came to preach to the poor. No philosopher nor economist she, but a leader in the field of social service, motivated by her understanding of the *Our Father*. These poor were her brothers, she was their sister. All had a common Fatherhood.

Conditions in Ireland at the time prompted Catherine McAuley's earnest solicitude. They demand to be examined for a moment if we are to understand her mission.

The Penal Code under William and Mary had dealt severely with Catholics and made them a persecuted and wretched group. This set of laws cut at education primarily, restricted trade and commerce, despoiled Catholics of their property, debarred them from entry into professional life. Thus did England hope for mass conversion to the Protestant faith. For nearly a century, these laws were operative and excluded Catholics from public life. They effected an age of misery and ignorance which precluded the normal development of a people. When Catherine's father was a child, Catholics were quietly but gradually strengthening their position. They attempted to conduct parish schools, with priests or lay teachers. Instruction in the faith purchased at this price would certainly have left deep appreciation. Yet these schools fought for survival. The government sought to stamp them out by a means still effective where allowed. In the so-called Charter schools endowed by the English government, free education was offered. Since the negative measures of suppression had failed, those in power hoped to attract children in the existing Catholic schools by means of a wider and more varied educational program. For the Irish who love learning, the allurements were a shining one.

Yet, on the whole, it was not successful bait, though it occasioned grave concern in Rome. The Church was scarcely in a position to set up rival schools, could not compete with the improved equipment and methods of instruction. The Holy Father warned the Irish hierarchy to forbid Catholic children to attend these Protestant schools where their faith was proselytized. He even

³*Ibid.*, p. 103.

urged the building of new schools to counteract the influence of the Charter schools. To this end, the Pope urged Catholic princes to contribute of their wealth.

But, in the designs of God, it was not Catholic princes who were to be instrumental for this purpose, but a middle-aged Irish heiress. For in 1822 when Catherine was forty-one years of age, the Callaghans left her their fortune of 25,000 pounds, equivalent to the present-day purchasing power of \$1,000,000 in American money. God works slowly but thoroughly. It was eighty years after the Pope's plea for Catholic education that Catherine began her own contribution to the cause.

How did she go about this? Did she set out to found a religious congregation at once? The picture of the teaching and nursing Sister, moving in classroom or hospital ward, was farthest from her mind. She had no thought for the moment but to retain control over all her newly acquired property and to use her money freely for the poor and needy. She invited two orphans into her home, distributed food and clothing daily to the poor, instructed the children in a nearby "Poor School" attached to her parish, taught girls needlework and knitting which she sold to her wealthy friends. She rented a house in Middle Abbey Street to be used as a town headquarters, visited the homes of the poor in the district, did what she could to alleviate the squalor and dirt. It was here that she became convinced that improvement must come from proper education of the rising generation.

Watching her work and admiring her largesse, the Irish Sisters of Charity arranged for Catherine a meeting with Mother Aikenhead, their superioress. Possibly they considered Miss McAuley a probable candidate for their Order, but Catherine would have none of it. As yet, she wanted nothing to do with nuns.

Perhaps she did desire, however, to test the purity of her charity, whether it were of God or just an adventurous fancy in the realm of piety. At any rate, we read that she sought out a certain Mrs. Harper, old, demented, uncared for, brought her to Coolock House and attended to her wants. From the old lady, she received nothing but abuse. If this were indeed a self-test, Catherine passed it triumphantly, for she continued her maintenance and personal care of the old woman until Mrs. Harper's death.

Her next move made her a leader in the field of social service. Twenty-one years before the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx, Catherine opened her first House of Mercy at Baggott Street, Dublin, in 1827. Here she planned to educate the poor and to give shelter to homeless girls. Her service to them was to be a *personal* one, recognizing as she did the close relationship between herself and every child of God. She saw herself bound to her needy brothers by the ties of a common birthright. This is the distinguishing feature of Catherine's life-work and differentiates her attitude from the socialistic tenets of the modern welfare state. This conception of Catherine McAuley as a Christian social service worker has been amply treated by Mother M. Hilda Miley, R.S.M. in her book, *The Ideals of Mother McAuley*. Here the author writes:



STORMANSTON HOUSE, COUNTY DUBLIN
Birthplace of Mother Catherine McAuley



COOLOCK HOUSE, COUNTY DUBLIN



SAINT CATHERINE'S CONVENT, BAGGOTT STREET, DUBLIN



CONVENT AND HOUSE OF MERCY, BAGGOTT STREET, DUBLIN

A Christian social service worker is not a theorist who, from a luxurious home, writes learned theses on the causes of poverty; it is not one who sends messages of sympathy to the afflicted; neither is it one who contributes large sums of money for the relief of the poor. It is one who wrestles with poverty as Christ did, who sympathizes personally with the afflicted as He did: Who relieves distress as He did. In other words, a Christian social service worker is another Christ, one of whom it may be said, as it was of Him, "He went about doing good."

Christ might have worked miracles from a distance, but instead He laid His hands upon the sick to cure them; He touched the eyes of the blind to restore their sight; He walked to the grave of Lazarus to call him back to life; He met the funeral procession at Naim to comfort the widowed mother; He traveled to the home of Jairus to restore to him his little daughter; He allowed the sick woman to touch the hem of His garments. In a word, He was the perfect Social Service Worker—"He went about doing good." Had He chosen to show His divine power by His word only, we should reverence and adore Him as God; but should we love Him as the tender, merciful Christ we know Him to be because of His personal service?

This personal, nay, this Christ-like service to the poor, is what Mother McAuley understood to be the definition of social service work.⁴

Teaching, also contemplated in the proposed program at Baggott Street House, invited Miss McAuley to visit the Kildare Place School, which planned its program in advance of the modern public school system in that it sought to afford educational advantages, excluding all religious teaching. While studying its methods of school management and instruction, Catherine observed the tragedy of lost faith among many of its students who should have been Catholic. For her, this was an experience made all the more poignant because she had witnessed the loss of faith in her own brother and sister.

Alert and thorough in her approach to organization for teaching, she not only studied the educational systems of Ireland, but journeyed to France for this purpose as well. From the first, Catherine McAuley sought to remedy the weakness in the present prevailing public school system by providing religious instruction and environment.

Meanwhile, the construction of the House of Mercy at Baggott Street, begun in July 1824, was progressing. The site chosen revealed Miss McAuley's attitude of mind. Why should Catholic charities be hidden in the lanes and alleys of the city? "Let your light shine before men," particularly before Protestant men, so that they may see the misery and want endured by the poor and thus be induced to help them. Catherine had designated her plans to Dr. Blake who approved them; the building was to contain two large airy classrooms, several big dormitories for lodging young women, an oratory, and small rooms for herself and for the ladies who might work with her.

Perhaps this program may seem very ordinary in the light of present-day highly developed social services and compulsory educational system. Yet, from the perspective of nineteenth century background it was, to say the least, cour-

⁴Miley, Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., *The Ideals of Mother McAuley*, pp. 43, 44.

ageous. For the most part, too, women were considered unsuited for work outside the home or cloister. It would take a woman of strong character, a good organizer, to push forward any program of social betterment. Catherine's courage, compelled by the charity of Christ, was equal to the task.

And what a gigantic task! Housing problems, poverty, unemployment, sickness, hunger—these conditions she sought to alleviate.

Her first helper was Mary Anne Doyle. This enthusiastic lady was really responsible for the opening of the House on the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy 1827. Catherine was still held by family ties, sickness and care in her brother-in-law's family, and could not take up permanent residence in Baggott Street until she had discharged her duties at home. But she told Miss Doyle to move in on any day she wished. Mary Anne suggested September 24. So on that day, the work in the House in Baggott Street began. It was the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

Other ladies soon joined Miss McAuley, who finally sold Coolock House and moved to Baggott Street permanently. It amused Catherine to see that her building resembled a convent for such was not her intention. Her strong prejudice toward all nuns is a curious phenomenon in her who was to become the foundress of one of the largest Sisterhoods in the world. Yet it can be explained perhaps, by remembering that, for the most part, Catherine had moved in Protestant circles where religious were viewed with suspicion. Probably she had never met a nun until her interview with Mother Aikenhead. All six communities in Dublin at the time were enclosed, so Catherine can scarcely be blamed for not checking on the accuracy of Protestant misrepresentation, centuries old.

Yet as the work went on, Catherine began to see, though slowly, that it could not continue as an anomaly. The first step toward uniformity was in dress. The ladies wore a plain black dress much like the habit later adopted, a small lace cap lined with black muslin, with a high caul and quilling around the face. Outside the House they wore a grey cloak with hood, a black silk bonnet with muslin veil. They had a common hour for rising, common prayers, a spiritual book read aloud by Catherine, said their Rosary in common, had daily Mass, weekly Confession. To any Sister of Mercy, it will be apparent that this regime resembled the present-day observance of hard work, prayer, and silence. Yet Catherine McAuley was *still* insisting that her ladies were not and never would be religious, but lay-women, free to come and go as they chose!

As soon as the ladies of Baggott Street adopted a uniform dress and began to lead a regular community life, some of the clergy quickly pointed out to Doctor Murray that this new development would injure the Sisters of Charity. Prejudice and misunderstanding reached such a point that, in less than a month after the formal opening of her chapel (June, 1829), Canon Matthias Kelly, the Administrator, informed her that she was to hand over her establishment to the Sisters of Charity.

What a test for this saintly woman! In her own house, her own organization, she was to be allowed but a few rooms for her use while her work would perish as such! At once she wrote to Dr. Murray submitting her will to his judgment.

Such complete sacrifice was not asked from her by God, however; Archbishop Murray called at Baggott Street the next day, authorizing Catherine to continue her work. Yet it was evident that His Grace was uneasy about the anomalous position of the House of Mercy.

Harassed by opposition and misunderstanding, worried that much criticism and disfavor would deter more volunteers for her work, and urged on by her friend, Dr. Blake, to adopt a regular religious status, Catherine, in 1830, finally agreed in principle to take the decisive step.

In deciding what rule her congregation would follow, Catherine considered the Carmelite rule, that followed by the Poor Clare nuns, and finally the Rule of Saint Augustine as adopted by Saint Thomas of Villanova. This last combined both the contemplative and active life, a blending suited to her purpose.

Now Miss McAuley was faced with the necessity of serving her noviceship in a religious order—she who had had practically no contact with Sisters and who had only recently overcome her prejudice toward them. She left the cares (or thought she did!) of Baggott Street and repaired to George's Hill, home of the Irish Presentation Sisters. Accompanied by Mary Anne Doyle and Elizabeth Harley, she began her postulancy on September 8, 1830.

What courage and generosity this entailed! Remember, she would be fifty years old on the 29th of September. She had been her own mistress for many years. Now she must submit to the direction of a Mistress of Novices. Even the prospect made her cower. She herself admitted in after years, that so repugnant to her feelings was the struggle, that, had she not had her Institute so deeply at heart, she would have sent for a coach to drive her back to Baggott Street.

No exemptions were made for Catherine McAuley by Mother Francis, superior. She was placed under the Mistress of Novices, Mother Teresa, an extremely vigilant woman. She humiliated Catherine, even publicly, was as rigid with her as she was with the others. Yet, in Mother Teresa's teachings, Catherine found a complement to her own. The mistress firmly grounded and rooted her charges in charity, a desire to uproot self-love, a profound sense of humility, and utter confidence in God. She further enjoined upon the novices perfect detachment from creatures; the strength for this poverty of spirit was to be found in constant prayer and union with God. Catherine most certainly imbibed the spirit of Mother Teresa, which was a true interior spirit. Her own rule, written soon afterwards, stressed union and charity and showed to what depth of love her docility and submission in the novitiate had led her.

If Catherine needed further conviction of the stabilizing effect of an authorized religious rule for her Institute, she received it now. At Baggott Street, her enthusiastic if indiscreet young helpers were pursuing their various inter-

pretations of what constituted a holy life. With no superior and no rule to guide them, (the junior of them all had been given charge of the House, and of course they were loath to obey her!) each one followed her own bent. One fasted unwisely, another took the discipline, another slept on hair-cloth, others remained half the night at prayer. Word was continually being brought to Catherine that her young people were breaking down through over-work and indiscreet mortification. Illness and even the death of one of her prospective Sisters saddened Catherine and added to the trials of her novitiate.

Miss McAuley and her two companions entered their retreat for profession on December 4, 1831, and took their vows on December 12 as the first Sisters of Mercy. It was likewise the birthday of the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy.

The history of her first year as Reverend Mother is one of trial in the form of illness and death among her Sisters, of planning her rule with the aid of Father Myles Gaffney, a parish curate, of preparing her novices for their reception.

Asiatic cholera scourged Ireland in the spring of 1832. To cope with the situation, the Board of Health set up an improvised hospital at Townsend Street, requesting the help of the Sisters of Mercy. Mother McAuley obtained the Archbishop's sanction for this work. Because of the suddenness of death and rapid discoloration of the corpses, it was a common belief that doctors and nurses were practicing euthanasia by poisoning their victims. The presence of the Sisters did much to win the patients' confidence.

The labor performed by those first young Sisters during the awful days of the epidemic is nothing short of herculean. Beginning at 8 a.m., they worked in shifts until 9 p.m. Mother McAuley remained practically all of the time in the wards, and was given full charge by the attending physician. He attributed the fewness of deaths to her wise and efficient administration. For hours, the Sisters knelt by the bedsides of those who were dying, helping them to meet their God in the right dispositions. Though at the height of the plague, deaths in Dublin averaged over 600 a day, it is remarkable that not one Sister was struck down, worn out as they were with fatigue.

Application was made in 1833 for Rome's formal approval of the Institute; it was received on May 23, 1835.

It was in 1835 that Mother Catherine, now fifty-four years of age, began the most amazing part of her career. From 1835 to 1841, the last year of her life, she founded no less than eleven convents and made plans for others. Probably in no phase of her life was her character delineated more clearly. Ill health overtook Catherine, she was concerned by sickness and death among her young Sisters; yet her indomitable courage, clear faith, heroic zeal made her a burning and shining light.

At no time did she plan for a foundation until some priest or bishop appealed to her in his need. At Kingston, she had purchased a convent as a health resort for her Sisters. By 1840, at the earnest request of Dr. Murray, the Sisters had consented to visit the sick there and teach school.

Each time she answered a call for Sisters, she supplied them at great sacrifice to the Baggott Street convent. Such was the case in 1836 when Rev. James O'Rafferty pleaded for her nuns. "If we don't take Tullamore, no other community will," she said and accepted the foundation. The people of the town gave them a warm welcome. Within a month, two postulants presented themselves. Here Catherine began her practice of having *The Thirty Days' Prayer* said in common that Our Lady of Mercy would bless the new convent.

When Father Thomas Cook begged Mother Catherine to supply his parish at Charleville, he promised a house and 500 pounds for a beginning. Though she knew this was insufficient, she trusted to Providence and arrived there with her young Sisters on October 31, 1836. Catherine found the Sisters' quarters small, poorly furnished, damp. She was worried about attracting postulants, yet they came; later Charleville was to be one of her most flourishing convents. Here as they visited the cabins of the poor who thus first experienced the work of active nuns, they won admiration as the "moving nuns." One old lady said, "Ah, sure it was the Lord Who drove you in amongst us."⁵ In discouraging days, Catherine remembered those words.

"Give me a small band of your fervent nuns and I will take upon myself the whole responsibility of their maintenance,"⁶ pleaded Dr. Nolan, in behalf of Carlow. He had received a legacy of 7,000 pounds from Michael Nowlon, keeper of a delft-shop. With this he promised to provide a convent and grounds, and to supply 100 pounds a year himself. How was she to grant his request? The number of her professed nuns was so depleted. Here Catherine learned one of her severest lessons in detachment. She realized that Sister Veronica, once her lady's maid at Coolock House, now her indispensable treasure at Baggott Street, would be the best choice for Carlow. Yet she hesitated to part with her. When Sister Veronica was stricken with typhus and died, Catherine took it as a punishment from God. She at once appointed her confidential secretary and dearest friend, Mother Francis Xavier Warde, for the Carlow convent. It is on such sacrifice that the work of God thrives.

Nor was the sacrifice to end with that tearful parting. When Catherine saw the Carlow convent, on that April day in 1837, she shrank from asking her Sisters to bear its inconvenience. Yet Mother Xavier Warde's courage was equal to the challenge and so was that of her Sisters. "When going from one room to another, they carried their chairs and made the scanty supply of furniture a source of amusement."⁷ Later, another convent was erected, built especially for the Sisters of Mercy, for which another benefactor supplied 3,000 pounds.

Here, for the first time, was established the "pension school" or as we would say now, an academy for young ladies. Thus a secondary course was offered to girls of the middle class. It was Mother McAuley's mind that Sisters could thus educate the more wealthy students with a sense of responsibility toward the poor. The school would also be a fertile ground for vocations.

⁵Savage, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 200.

On the day Catherine returned from Charleville in 1836, Dr. Murphy was waiting for her to request Sisters for Cork, where once Nano Nagle had worked among its poor. Again, provision was already made for a convent and maintenance. When Catherine arrived with a small group of her nuns on July 6, 1836, workmen were still busy on the beautiful convent on Rutland Street, donated by a Miss Barbara Gould. This lady who lavished her substance on Christ's poor, turned over to the little community her property whose rents brought in a substantial annual income. And the first postulant entered on July 23, 1836.

Meanwhile, at the Motherhouse, and at the branch houses, too, sickness and death claimed many of Mother McAuley's young companions. Sorrow and anxiety, her own ill health, only served to make her more single-minded, strong in caring for the interests of Christ. She knew time for her was already running out and there was still so much to be done. Her Sisters were young and inexperienced. All looked to her to shoulder the burden. Cost what it may, they must not look in vain.

When Bishop John Ryan of Limerick appealed for Sisters in 1837, he promised that a Miss Heffernan would endow the convent and there were postulants ready and waiting. "We are very near a stop," Catherine said, "I should say a full stop—feet and hands are numerous enough, but the heads are nearly all gone."⁸ True, mature minds were lacking, for most of the Sisters then at Baggott Street were girls scarcely out of their teens. Yet her young people did not fail her. When she arrived at Limerick on September 24, 1838, she began the *Thirty Days' Prayer* and implored St. Theresa who loved foundations to aid her. There were four postulants in six weeks! Yet the poor, wretched though their condition was, objected to postulants visiting them in their hovels and demanded "real nuns". "Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to when possible,"⁹ Catherine said good-humoredly. She arranged with Dr. Ryan to shorten the postulancy so that the newcomers might appear in their habits as soon as possible.

England called for nuns in 1839. In Bermondsey, Father Peter Butler in his work for the poor was aided by some lay women, led by a Lady Barbara Eyre. He requested that he might send two of these ladies to Cork for a novitiate. Catherine agreed to this proposal. Before she returned with them to begin the Bermondsey foundation, she conducted for them a tour of the nearby convents to show what wisdom and experience had been gathered by these foundations. Though she was sixty years old now, she thus showed an openness of mind and adaptability while maintaining a resolute hold on essential principles. When the little group of six arrived in England on November 18, 1839, their new convent was ready and six postulants were waiting!

Catherine was certain that her health was failing, yet she "gloried in her infirmities," because the power of God was so evidently manifest in this early

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 244.

flowering. She was cheerful, entertaining, gay, wanted no attention for herself, showed remarkable resiliency of spirit. Many Sisters believed Bermondsey would be her last foundation, but not so Catherine McAuley.

"When I think rest is coming, business only seems to commence,"¹⁰ she wrote, telling of Dr. Walsh's request for a foundation at Birmingham. The Earl of Shrewsbury offered money for a convent, he hastened to inform her, and might he send "two respectable females" for a novitiate at Baggott Street? Though in the winter of 1840 the dreaded typhus fever and tuberculosis again robbed the motherhouse of some of its young Sisters, Catherine did not refuse Dr. Walsh. She trained his postulants and made an English subject superior of the new community. During this year, she also made plans for a Galway convent, sought by Father Peter Daly.

Setting out with two Sisters on May 4, 1840, for Galway, she took this journey in easy stages. Arriving on May 6, they moved into their new convent on May 7 and—wonder of wonders—four postulants were to be received on June 11. Of these, one fell ill with typhus. Catherine nursed her night and day, but the young woman died on the day scheduled for reception. The ceremony was postponed until June 25. Before the usual *Thirty Days' Prayer* was completed, Catherine was called back to Dublin where more illness claimed her attention and care.

Birr was her eleventh and last foundation, though she made plans for others. It was a peculiar circumstance which summoned her Sisters to Birr. A curate had defied the Bishop's authority, had led some of the townspeople into a schism. Efforts to cope with the situation had thus far failed, and it was suggested that a community of the Sisters of Mercy might help to heal the wound. Accordingly, they were requested by Father Matthew. A convent was ready for Mother McAuley and her companions on December 27, 1840. She herself, with her Sisters, visited the homes of the people in the parish when occasions of mercy demanded it. Thus they had the opportunity of talking to the people, and tried to effect peace. Their success finally brought even the recalcitrant priest to his senses.

Whenever Mother McAuley travelled to make a new foundation, she always visited the superiors of her other convents to support and encourage them. She continued always to prepare every band of postulants during the retreat for reception. The one conducted at Birmingham was her last. Before she set sail for home on August 20, 1841, she wrote to Mother Xavier Warde, "I am very weary."¹¹ Yet one joy comforted her. Before she undertook this last journey, she had received word that the Holy See had sent its official confirmation of her Rule. In a Papal decree given on the 6th of June, 1841, Pope Gregory XVI confirmed the Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy, thus making the Institute pontifical.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 359.

None realized better than Catherine that her health was completely undermined. Quietly, she began to make preparations for the end, maintaining her bright and gay manner so as to hide her serious condition from her Sisters. Before she left Birmingham, she wrote to Baggott Street asking to have a very low iron bedstead made for her and placed in the infirmary where she planned to retire on her return. Half apologetically, she closed her letter to the infirmarian, "It is strange to me, my dear Sister Theresa, to write so much about myself and to give so much trouble."¹²

Though her doctor confirmed her belief that she was dying, she refused to alarm her Sisters by allowing them to share her knowledge. It is a wonder that they were all so unperceiving especially when her cough was almost incessant, and she was not able to follow the community routine after her return to the Motherhouse on September 21. Confined to her room, she maintained her interest in the affairs of the Institute, made arrangements that a sick Sister receive a change and rest, and wrote to her solicitor concerning payment on a small legacy. Early in October she began to evaluate all her papers, sorting out those she thought might be necessary later, and destroying her personal papers which she deemed of no further use. This she did quietly, and no one appeared to notice that she was calmly withdrawing from the scene with no ostentation or fuss.

Her last two letters to Mother Xavier Warde are a tribute to her indomitable courage. There is a lightness of touch that depicts the utter confidence in God that had been with her now so many years and had grown stronger as she neared His judgment. In her last letter to her friend written October 12, 1841, a month before her death, she closes with the simple request: "I wish Reverend Mr. Maher would bring you to see me."¹³ Nothing more. Mother Warde did not realize her superior was so ill. She took no steps to come.

Early in November, 1841, Mother McAuley was confined to her bed. An abscess had formed in her lung. It was now that her nurse discovered an ulcer on her back brought on by use of haircloth and chain. This she had concealed to the end. On November 8, she asked to be anointed and she wished to profit from the Sacrament's strengthening effect. Even then the Sisters did not think her dying. But all were brought to a realization that the loss of their Mother was imminent when, on November 9, the dreaded lesion in the lung took place, leaving Catherine prostrate with weakness. She lingered on, suffering agony until November 11. Mass was offered in her room at 8:30 that morning, she preserved consciousness all day, spoke to each young Sister individually, begging that union and charity be preserved. During her lifetime she had feared death; when it came, she knew only peace and joy.

For how could she fear the Master whose faithful steward she had been? She had nurtured His Institute of Mercy in its growing, had experienced its

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 365.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 371.



CONVENT CHAPEL, BAGGOTT STREET, DUBLIN



CONVENT GARDEN AND CLOISTER



MOTHER MCAULEY'S OFFICE
First Copy of Holy Rule on Table



INFIRMARY WHERE MOTHER MCAULEY DIED

pruning by ill success and death among its first flowers. But that pruning was to yield a hundredfold.

Catherine McAuley closed her eyes on the first scene of Mercy on November 11, at eight o'clock in the evening. It was that evening which Christ had chosen from all eternity to reward the greatness of her love . . .

Over Catherine McAuley's grave her Sisters have built a beautiful memorial. Yet the greatest monument to their heroic Mother is the flowering of her Institute, now one of the largest Sisterhoods in the world. Those whom she had so successfully filled with her spirit took up God's work and carried it on.

Before her death, Catherine McAuley had heard America calling. Though a cry of need had always met response from her, no matter how great the sacrifice entailed, this time she was helpless to answer. But her Sisters carried the torch of Mercy to the distant shores of the United States of America. The one who offered to undertake this new endeavor was perhaps she whom Catherine would first have sanctioned, Mother Francis Xavier Warde, her most intimate friend and ardent Sister of Mercy.



CHAPTER THREE

America Calls

IT WAS in direct consequence to the flood of Irish emigration to America that Mother Xavier Warde and six Sisters of Mercy set sail for the United States on the good ship, *Queen of the West*, on that memorable November 12, 1843.

What were the causes of the great dispersal which brought 65,000 Irish a year to the shores of the New World? In 1841, the year of Mother Catherine McAuley's death, the population of Ireland was well over eight million, making it the most densely populated country in Europe.¹ Ninety per cent of these people lived from the land. They depended for their sustenance, to a great extent, on the potato crop, always a poor investment since its success or failure depended on such uncontrollable factors as weather and diseases. The crop had failed intermittently every two years since 1817 through 1844. Destitution, famine, the epidemics consequent upon starvation were the results. The Sisters had already striven to cope with the situation in their own native land.

Overpopulation! The cry has a familiar ring to it. We hear it too often today. Then, the controlling powers in government waived solutions which would revolutionize the iniquitous system of land tenure, the unjust distribution of wealth, the poor methods and equipment used in farming, the absence of sufficient capital. They advocated emigration as the solution. Landlords, disgusted with the bad harvests, unpaid rents, famished tenants, sought to change from tillage to pasturage. To make way for the sheep and cattle, they sought to consolidate the estates. This would mean eviction of the agricultural classes—get off the land, get out of the country!

The masses were forced to accept the mandate or perish. The tide of emigration reached 93,000 by 1842 and rose in strength until the great famine of 1846. Catholics outnumbered Protestant emigrants. Though agricultural laborers formed the greater proportion of the displaced persons, a good part of the middle class came to the New World with some accumulated wealth.

Passage on sailing vessels in those days took from thirty-five to forty days and sometimes two or three months in bad weather. Descriptions of the hardships endured on these voyages surely indicate that the courage of the emigrants rivalled that of the first great exodus from Europe's shores made in the *Mayflower*. Of course, they travelled steerage for the most part. They brought their own provisions; a bag of potatoes, some bread and tea, perhaps. Steerage meant being jammed into a compartment about five and one-half feet high,

¹Lord, Sexton, and Harrington, *History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, Vol. 2, p. 111.

between decks filled with tiers of bunks. Thus they had a common living-room, dining room, dormitory, and hospital. Even in 1843, on such a reputable ship as the *Queen of the West*, the *Annals* record:

The Sisters devoted themselves to the care of the steerage and second-cabin passengers, many of whom, owing perhaps to the wretched accommodations which even so fine a vessel possessed for her poorer patrons, were ailing during the whole voyage. The second cabin was separated from the steerage only by a partition of meat barrels, which, during the first night, a dreadful lurch of the ship upset . . . A journal kept by the Sisters reads: "Our poor people suffered much in the late storm. (A hurricane!) Yet they are so resigned to suffer, even to go down, if God pleases, that we are greatly edified by them."²

These Irish first sought employment in the United States as unskilled laborers in a kind of public works program. They were industrious, had immense enthusiasm for their new home, were willing to work. And work they did! Early railroads and canals were built by Yankee capital and Irish labor. Missionary priests followed these railroad gangs, and the line of the new iron highways was studded with new Catholic mission stations and churches. These immigrants usually settled where they were working, often in conditions outslumming our present day poor areas. Yet the Irish weathered conditions for the most part, though often with tremendous losses. Records substantiate the fact that the toll on health due to working conditions was almost incredible. Men worked for fifteen hours a day for fifty or sixty cents a day on the public works program and in the mills. One out of every five children died. Despite these tremendous handicaps, the Irish loved America, were by nature disposed to fit into its pattern of life. But they clung to their Faith. They gave to their church from their scanty means to a degree that was nothing short of heroic. The network of Catholic Churches and institutions in New England today is a lasting tribute to the faith, courage, and self-denial of these early Celtic immigrants.

Such adherence to Catholicism was bound to evoke protest. It did. The Native American movement of the 1830's and 1840's constituted its first organized manifestation. Though the newcomers found many friends in political and economic life, the majority of natives, especially in New England, associated the great influx of "foreigners" with the barbarian invasions. The essential element in Nativism was religious prejudice. It denounced "Popery" as a false religion, because it taught worship of saints, relics, images, and of the Virgin Mary more than of God Himself. The Mass rivalled heathen idolatry and worse. Catholicism taught immorality, pardon for sins could be purchased in the Confessional, Catholic schools were places of vice, the morals of priests, monks, and nuns were, to say the least, corrupt. The Church operated as a political machine, with these "foreigners" as minions of the Pope. They sought to destroy free thought and democratic government in the greatest republic of the world. "It was rare to find a Protestant clergyman then who could think

²*Annals*, p. 60.

of the Catholic Church without clothing his thoughts in the mysterious and dreadful language of the Apocalypse when describing the anti-Christ.”³

Street-fights, mob riots, attempts to burn churches, evidenced the fact that bigotry was on the march. A placard posted on the streets of Hartford in 1831 read:

TO THE PUBLIC

Be it known unto you far and near that all Catholics and all persons in favor of the Catholic religion are a set of vile imposters, liars, villains, and cowardly cut-throats. (Beware of false doctrine.)

I bid defiance to that villain, the Pope.

A TRUE AMERICAN.⁴

The climax of all this narrow-mindedness and prejudice occurred in the famous burning of the Charlestown Convent on August 11, 1834. It was not an isolated incident. Because its repercussions later threatened the very existence of the Sisters of Mercy in New England and showed what degree of courage they exerted to sustain a foothold in this territory, it may be well to review the event briefly.

The Ursuline convent in Charlestown, called Mount Benedict, housed ten Sisters and forty-four pupils. These Sisters came in 1826, a Catholic Church had been built in 1828, a Catholic cemetery on Bunker Hill in 1830; the progress of “the invaders” was rapid. Charlestown, predominantly Protestant, determined that it should resist. It considered Mount Saint Benedict as a symbol of the Pope’s resolution to destroy all that Bunker Hill stood for. Schools were part of his secret plan. Parents were dissuaded from sending their children to the nuns. Yet the Ursulines’ best students were drawn from some of the “first” Protestant families in Boston.

In Rebecca Reed the Nativists found their heroine. Rebecca, a recent convert to Catholicism, poor, uneducated, friendless, had spent six months as a charity pupil at Mount Benedict. Discontented after four months, she left, resumed the Protestant religion, and began a whispering campaign against her benefactors. For two years she continued her slander against Mount Benedict. Finally the newspapers took it up, selectmen from Boston were authorized to inspect the convent. This they did from attic to cellar and, satisfied with their tour, they drafted a statement for the press, exonerating the nuns from charges perpetrated against them. Plans to destroy the convent had been made for Monday night, the drafted statement could appear in the papers only on Tuesday morning.

The assault on the convent began at 11:30 p.m. Rioters burst in the doors, the nuns and girls escaped to the garden, were helped over the high wall, ran across fields and were sheltered in the home of a friendly Protestant family about a half mile away. Meanwhile the raiders were doing a thorough job.

³Dowling, *The Catholic Church in New England*, Vol. 2, p. 372.

⁴Quoted in *History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, p. 204.

Engine No. 13 of the fire company supplied the fire torches. They smashed everything they didn't steal, made a pyre of the cross, altar ornaments, and combustible materials in the center of the rooms. About 12:30 the convent went up in a roar of flames, torches were likewise applied to the barn, stables, icehouse, and farmhouse on the grounds. No voice was raised in protest, no precautions taken by authorities, no attempt made to restore order.

Bishop Fenwick denounced the incendiarists but counselled forgiveness of his people. They made no act of retaliation under his splendid leadership. When court trials began for the rioters, every one was finally acquitted. The General Court later opposed Bishop Fenwick's petition for indemnification for Mount Benedict's property. The Ursulines were forced to withdraw to Canada.

These were dark years in the history of the Church in New England. The impetus thus given the No Popery crusade caused the movement to gain momentum until it reached its climax in the Know-Nothings in the 1850's.

It was to an area thus infected with misrepresentation, misunderstanding, outward conflict that the Sisters of Mercy were invited to set up their convents. Small wonder that they were urged to take the precaution of wearing secular dress in public until their lives were no longer endangered by open hostility. The *Annals* state:

... The nuns travelled in secular garb—black cashmere dresses, white tulle caps with a little trimming of white gauze ribbon.⁵

During the 1850's particularly, this secular dress was a necessity if the Sisters were to survive. For at this time a party called the Know-Nothings took up the Crusade of the Native Americans. A resurgence of their activity was brought about by the great famine of 1846 which again increased Irish immigration.

Two years before the Communist manifesto in 1848, Our Lady had appeared to Maximin and Melanie at La Salette. Part of her message had been, "There will come a great famine. Before the famine comes, children under seven years of age will die in the hands of those who hold them; and others will do penance by the famine."

Her words were verified, for in 1846, over a million people throughout Europe perished by famine. Ireland had been accustomed to famine for one hundred years; but in 1846, its horrors were unprecedented, continuing for five years. Other crops failed also; wheat, oats, turnips, beans, onions. Due to an epidemic among the cattle, herds were lost; moreover, it became increasingly impossible to feed those who survived disease. Tens of thousands of people perished in the anguish of starvation, of cholera and other afflictions consequent upon it. In their desire to flee from such misery, the masses flooded the emigrant ships once more, seeking release in a new world.

⁵*Annals*, p. 59.

There were other contributing causes to the Immigration of 1847 and the early 50's: the Corn Laws, the consolidation of areas for pasturage and consequent eviction of farm laborers, the Poor Laws which prohibited public aid to anyone who owned one-fourth of an acre of land, the Encumbered Estates Act by which the old landlords were dispossessed. Yet the famine was the principal factor causing immigration in this country. It directly related to the need for the Sisters of Mercy to care for the poor, the orphan, and to educate their children.

Growth of immigration begot a strong nativist or anti-foreign sentiment on the part of the older American stock. The party organized against them in 1853 was secretly called the Supreme Order of the Star-Spangled Banner. It employed grips, pass-words, oaths, and ritualistic ceremonies. When queried concerning the mysteries of the Order, the response was "I know nothing." Popularly, then, they were dubbed "Know-Nothings." Each member took a solemn oath to oppose any but American-born Protestants for office. In the Fall elections of 1854, the Know-Nothings carried Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Kentucky, and California.⁶

How much of this religious bigotry was understood by the Sisters who first had to cope with it is not certainly known. Surely the prelates who urged foundations upon them were conversant with conditions, not only in the religious sphere but in the educational as well. As far back as 1829, leaders in the Church faced the difficult problem of secular education. The First Provincial Council of Baltimore proclaimed in 1829, "We judge it absolutely necessary that schools be established in which the young may be taught the principles of faith and morality, while being instructed in letters."⁷

Attempts were made to establish day schools, financed by parents or church collections, housed in church basements or other unsatisfactory places, taught by Irish schoolmasters.

The Catholic schoolmaster was an institution of those days. He was the "scholar" of the community, the letter-writer, perhaps the man who read to the group of "cronies," the *Boston Pilot*, or the more fiery journals of other cities. His pay from his school was small, and usually he supplemented his school work by some labor which enabled him to make a living.⁸

However, the position of Catholic day schools was precarious, their courses intermittent, teachers underpaid. The whole attempt was at best sporadic. The majority of Catholic children at that time found it possible to get an education only in the public schools.

For the public school system, on the other hand, it was an age of expansion. These were the days of leadership by Horace Mann in Massachusetts and Henry Barnard in Connecticut. It was the era of non-sectarianism, a movement to give a type of religious instruction acceptable to all Protestant denominations. Horace Mann, a Unitarian, did not set out to secularize the schools.

⁶Schlesinger, A. M., *Political and Social History of U. S.*, p. 133.

⁷Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

⁸Dowling, *op. cit.*, p. 373.

He could not foresee the logical and far-reaching effects of his tenets. At the time, he wanted to retain religious and moral instruction, yes; but it must be such that Unitarians could agree. He waged his battle strongly with the more conservative Protestants. Gradually his views prevailed. Public schools gave a neutral kind of religious instruction, suited to any Protestant sect while inimical to none. The arrangement did not in any way consider the Catholic position. Yet Catholic parents had little choice but to send their children to these institutions of learning. Though the lack of proper religious training in school was in many cases supplied to a great extent in the home, parents and prelates alike saw the immediate need of Catholic schools if the Faith they had so dearly maintained was to be preserved for the coming generations. Great indeed was the need for religious teachers!

The over-all picture in the territory now known as the diocese of Providence was pretty much the same after the great influx of "foreigners" in 1846. It was not until 1844 that the diocese of Hartford was made, encompassing within its boundaries all of the State of Rhode Island. Before that time, the problem created by the fusion of native and foreign elements had no meaning at all in Rhode Island. Catholic population was very small, and many of the Irish in Providence and Pawtucket were Protestants, coming from the North of Ireland.

In Rhode Island, Catholics and non-Catholics appear to have maintained amicable relationships in the early 1800's. This statement is supported by some pertinent facts. When Father Robert Woodley in 1828 tried to raise funds for a church in his parish—the extent of which now comprises the entire diocese of Providence—he was supported by Mr. William Simons, editor of the *Providence Patriot*. In August, 1828, Mr. David Wilkinson gave a lot for a church site in part of the property now belonging to St. Mary's parish, Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He was the brother-in-law of Samuel Slater, cotton manufacturer.

Even in 1837 when there were three Catholic churches, two priests, and a growing Irish-Catholic population, Rhode Island maintained its liberal attitude towards them. At the time of the destruction of the Charlestown convent, Newport citizens offered hospitality to the Ursuline nuns. Providence papers condemned the Charlestown mob. Father John Corry wrote concerning his church in Newport: "Our church stood for two years with its windows unprotected by blinds, and during that time, not one pane of glass was broken."⁹

Further instances of this amicable relationship between native and foreign elements may be instanced. At the first Saint Patrick's Day banquet in the City Hall of Providence in 1839, *one hundred Irishmen* and several "Americans" were present. Toasts given lauded the compatability existing between employers and employees, the "virtuous and liberal Americans of Providence who spurn bigotry and tyranny with the spirit of Emmet and Fitzgerald." Another praised Rhode Island "conspicuous among her New England sisters for religious liberty."¹⁰

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 366.

¹⁰*Loc. cit.*



Art Work

Art is taught by the Sisters in grammar, junior high, high schools, and college. Talented members of the Community do work in oil paints, decorate chinaware, paint spiritual bouquets. Here, a Sister puts the finishing touch on handmade and handpainted garments for the Infant of Prague statues.

Music

Novices are introduced to church music.



One of Saint Xavier's freshman receives an organ lesson.



Sisters learn to play on wind instruments for future orchestra work.



Harp lessons form part of a teacher's musical training.



Cathedral choir boys rehearse for High Mass.



Piano lessons are taught on college, secondary, and grammar school levels.

This good feeling was modified and decreased by the Dorr Rebellion and by the murder trial of Amasa Sprague in 1844. Circumstances pointed to the family of Nicholas Gordon, Irish and Catholic, as the murderer of Sprague, found dead in a swamp on his own land. Gordon had kept a store in Cranston, his license withheld at the instigation of Sprague. Gordon was thought to have murdered his enemy out of revenge. The court declared him guilty; he was sentenced to be hanged. This was the last instance of capital punishment in the State, and it was pretty well understood later that Gordon had nothing to do with the murder. At the time, however, the incident served to intensify feeling against "foreigners."

Alienation of the Irish as a Catholic and foreign element further increased between 1840 and 1850 when Massachusetts and Rhode Island led all states in population gains due to the famine years. In 1854, Providence counted 41,513 in its census, of whom 8,333 adults were born in Ireland.¹¹ Conditions resulting from this influx were the same here as they were all over New England. Immigration brought poverty, the horrors of ship fever, exhaustion after years of starvation. The ravages of disease and death filled every place with widows and orphans. There was room in the business world for the Irishman who would abjure his Faith. Orphans might find refuge in private homes if they would submit to proselytizing. School conditions followed the same trend as in the rest of New England.

Interesting to note in these days was the presence of several Catholic schools under lay teachers here in Rhode Island.

In the Cathedral parish, children attended school in the dark and damp basement of the old church. In the early 1840's under Bishop Tyler, it was taught by a lay mistress.

Shortly after the erection of Saint Patrick's church in 1845, a night school was opened. Previous to this, in 1843, a little school was opened back of the church and in 1845 moved to a more convenient place and enlarged to two rooms. At first only girls attended; in 1849, boys were admitted and the school placed in charge of John Coyle, vigorous protagonist of "school rights" for Catholic children. A description of this early school shows how brave and meager were these first attempts to solve the educational problem in Rhode Island. "Like the Cathedral school, Saint Patrick's was furnished only with long benches for the scholars, who either had to put their books on the seat beside them or hold them in their laps. Hanging leaves for writing desks were suspended along the walls of the room. When required for writing, these were adjusted to a proper level by supports."¹²

Saint Joseph's parish opened a somewhat similar school in 1854. It had an enrollment of 200 children in 1858. However, it was closed and used for a parochial residence soon after that because the parishioners were too poor to support it. At Saint Mary's, Pawtucket, school was conducted by lay teachers

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 368.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 399.

from 1855 until 1862. The same effort was being made in Saint Charles parish, Woonsocket, where for ten years, from 1859-1869, the parochial school was in the hands of lay teachers. The school building on the corner of Earle and Daniel Streets was constructed of brick, the same splendid structure which stands there today. Surely it is a monument to the courage and devotion of the early Catholic families in Woonsocket.

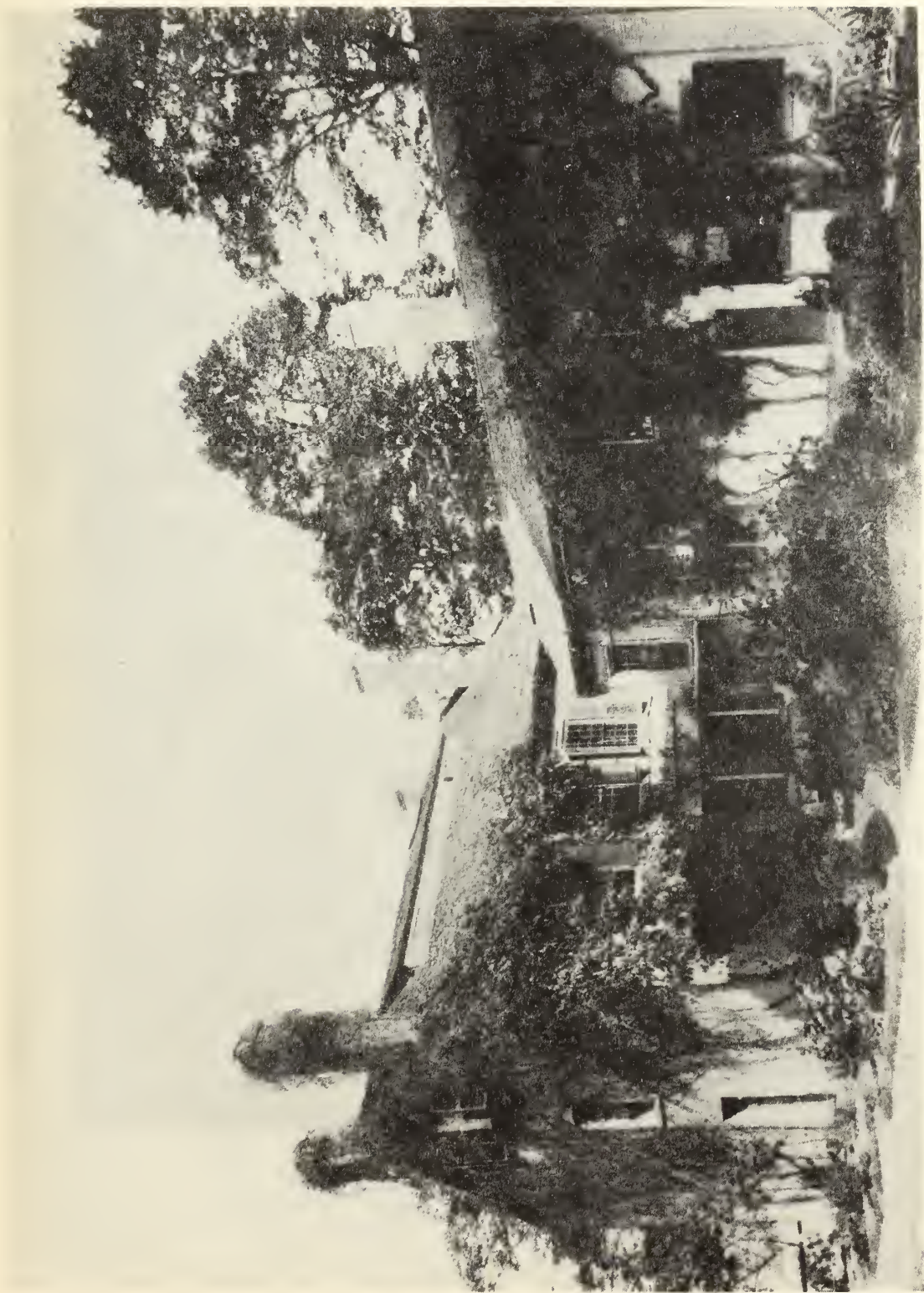
From 1846 to 1854, a parochial school in Saint Mary's, Newport was managed by lay teachers. Even when the Sisters of Mercy went there in 1854 they taught only girls; boys continued under the direction of the school master. A reference to this "master" is made by Benjamin Pearce, a native of Newport at the time:

Along in the '60's, Newport blossomed out quite extensively in the matter of military companies . . . The Irish company was under the command of W. K. Delaney, a pedagogue in charge of Saint Mary's parochial school, whose methods of drill and discipline, like those in his school, were unique and amusing. The following command was an average specimen: "Now turn the corner the same as ye did last night."¹³

Such, then, was the background for the American foundation to be made by the Sisters of Mercy in the New England States. Its "stern and rock-bound coast" offered no friendly greeting. They came to supply a need in education, to help overcome bigotry, prejudice, misrepresentation, to care for the sick, poor, and orphans. The roots of Mercy were to go deep into the soil, to cover the rocks in luxuriant growth. But it would take a truly apostolic spirit on the part of these pioneer women. Poverty awaited them, humiliation, even danger. Could they meet the challenge? Could they spread Christ's Kingdom in the hearts of others by the methods that were His own?

Mother Francis Xavier Warde, American foundress, their leader and inspiration, answers for them. She was the valiant woman chosen to establish thirty-eight convents in a land where the charred remains of Mount Benedict bespoke a warning against any attempts to further Catholic education.

¹³Pearce, B. S., *Recollections of a Long and Busy Life*, p. 150.



Garden view of Saint Francis Xavier Convent, corner of Broad and Claverick Streets. This building was the former Stead Estate, purchased by Bishop O'Reilly in 1851. It was demolished in 1894 when the cornerstone for the present convent was laid.



MOTHER MARY FRANCIS XAVIER WARDE
American Foundress

CHAPTER FOUR

Mother Xavier Warde Answers

WHEN Frances Warde was a girl at Mountrath in Queen's County, Ireland, she never dreamed of outwitting the Know-Nothings as an incognito nun or of sloshing along in a stage coach deep in the mud of mid-western U. S. A. Neither could she have envisioned the beady black eyes of the red-skinned Indian children who later called her "pale-faced mother."

Fanny Warde was very much like any other little daughter of an Irish gentleman in the early eighteen hundreds. Well, perhaps just a shade different then, since she was the youngest of five children and her mother died shortly after her birth in 1810.

They called her beautiful home Bellbrook House, possibly because it was near a stream between two hills and next door to the ruins of an ancient castle.

She loved her aunt who took care of her, her oldest sister Sara who tried to mother her, her strong decisive father, and the teachers who were her private tutors. Dear to her childish heart were the smoothly sloping terrain, the closely clipped hedgerows, the odor from the swirling bloom of white and pink hawthorne.

In the precious time after the evening meal, she and her grown-up brother John would go to the little altar she had made in a sort of crypt behind the eastern wall of the ruined castle. Together they would kneel before the picture of Christ blessing little children. He would repeat some simple prayer for her or explain a thought from the great Saint Theresa, lover of religious foundations. They'd watch the sun canonize the hills in a blaze of glory.

Her aunt would hear her night prayers and put her to bed, kneeling beside her little niece talking to her about the day and whether she had loved God and committed no sin. And Frances would drift off to sleep, thinking of God and Saint Theresa and the crypt in the ruined wall and Christ blessing little children . . .

Sadness met Frances when another brother, studying for the priesthood at Maynooth, died on the day he was to have been ordained. Soon after, her sister Helen died in her eighteenth year. It was an added sorrow for the little girl to watch her father, broken-hearted. Besides, they were forced to give up lovely Bellbrook House. Lord de Vesci wanted the site for a college and succeeded in seizing the leases. The family moved to Dublin where Mr. Warde was known as a "scholar and a gentleman." He died soon afterwards. Frances remembered the evening well. There had been a dinner at Monasterevan and Mr. Moore, the poet, and several of her father's celebrated friends were present . . .

First Communion and Confirmation strengthened her devotion to Our Lord who loved children. Bishop Doyle examined the Confirmation class in the presence of the entire congregation assembled for the administration of the Sacrament, a custom in those days. When he heard Frances' clear intelligent answers, he placed her on the sanctuary step and said, "This child is destined by God for some great work in His service." Then a thought struck him, perhaps a premonition. "And why have you chosen Theresa for your confirmation name?" he inquired. Her answer was candid, simple. "Because, my Lord, I think it is a very pretty name."

As for study, Frances was quite content with English, literature, and the arts. But as for the philosophical or mathematical branches—there is the story of her older sister Sara locking up a volume of Milton so that Frances would pay attention to her algebraic equations!

"Never did I behold in any other spot a contrast so striking as that which misery and grandeur form in that unfortunate country" wrote Shelly of early nineteenth century Dublin.¹ Frances grew to young womanhood amid the grandeur, surely. Yet she manifested an interest in the poor of her city, saving her dainties for them, teaching them catechism, and rewarding their study with a gay song.

Gaiety grew with Frances into her early teens. Dublin's round of parties, fashions, and amusements delighted her. Animated, eager, buoyant, she had a capacity for pleasure that made her popular. Her desire to please others only added to the charm of this tall, dignified, lovely blue-eyed girl. Yet as she was caught up in the exhilarating rhythm of a dance, as the music lingered with her, haunting in its melody, another picture pervaded her subconsciousness.

It was the memory of Ireland's poor in their one-roomed cabins, nothing between them and the sky but thatch. The poor had only a little straw for a bed, and one blanket. You'd see only potatoes and maybe a little salt for food . . .

Frances began to worry about wasting her time. She confided her state of mind to her confessor, Dr. Armstrong. He reproached her, indeed, advising a schedule of work for her and recommending a few hours a day of teaching in the Poor Schools lately established by Catherine McAuley.

And so, at eighteen, Frances met Catherine as Xavier in his youth had encountered Ignatius Loyola. Catherine loved the young girl whose ardor for Christ's poor led her to Baggott Street. Frances received from Miss McAuley the motherly affection and interest she had never known. Though there were nearly thirty years between them, and though their temperaments were almost opposite, their love of God begot and sealed a friendship that was to be lifelong.

The "few hours a day" which Dr. Armstrong had suggested soon embraced a full schedule of work. Ardent, affectionate, a capable and willing worker, Frances must have been a solace to Catherine McAuley's heart in those early days. At twenty, she was made official housekeeper at Baggott Street while Miss

¹Landreth, Helen, *Dear Dark Head*, p. 261.

McAuley made her novitiate. At twenty-two, she received the religious habit of a Sister of Mercy and the name of Sister Mary Francis Xavier.

After she pronounced her vows on January 24, 1833, at the first ceremony of religious profession in the Institute, she was soon Mother McAuley's private secretary and then her Mother Assistant.

After she had been named for the Carlow foundation in 1837 at the age of twenty-seven, Mother Xavier Warde made three other Irish foundations before sailing to America. In 1839, at the appeal of Father Gerard Doyle, a foundation was made at Naas; in 1840, one at Wexford, requested by Dr. Keating. The latter convent was poor in the extreme. But Frances Warde, child of the Irish aristocracy and once comfortably lodged, now saw poverty as God's seal of approval on her work. It was characteristic of each of her foundations thereafter that they commenced with small beginnings and were blessed magnificently. Westport in 1842 was to be the last of her Irish foundations.

Mother McAuley's death came as Mother Xavier Warde's severest lesson in detachment. She often said in after years that no circumstance she ever endured "smote her heart so deeply as did this absence from her dying friend."²

As early as 1835, Father Michael O'Connor of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, then a student in Rome, had been asked to translate into Italian some chapters of the rule for the Sisters of Mercy. Thus he became acquainted with their work. When in 1843, he became Bishop of Pittsburgh, he referred his request for nuns to Dr. Cullen, president of the Irish college at Rome. Dr. Cullen had friends and relatives in the Carlow convent, and advised the Bishop to visit there for volunteers for the United States.

Thus it came about that on October 4, 1843, Frances Warde found herself listening attentively to the earnest plea Bishop O'Connor was making for missionaries. Eloquently he pictured the needs of the West, the need for teachers in the all-important Catholic schools. Adults needed instruction, the sick poor needed care, he even spoke of founding a hospital. Pittsburgh had resources, he explained; people would cooperate with their efforts. Lastly, he appealed to their love of promoting God's glory and the salvation of souls. So persuasive were his words that each of the twenty-three Sisters in the Carlow convent offered to go!

Mother Xavier Warde was Mistress of Novices at the time, having ceded her office as superior to Mother Cecilia Maher at a recent election. It was decided that her temperament would be ideally suited to missionary work in the New World. Accordingly, she was appointed Reverend Mother to the band of six Sisters who left their beautiful Carlow convent for the poorest of the poor abodes which awaited them in America.

Among the preparations for the journey, the Sisters had to think of suitable hair-do's and millinery, for they were to travel as seculars. They wore their hair "folded back in bands from the forehead."³

²Sisters of Mercy, *Rev. Mother Xavier Warde*, p. 73.

³*Annals*, p. 59.

The milliner insisted on a fashionable head dress, suggesting that the Mother Superior's hat be adorned somewhat more elaborately. Her black cap was trimmed with lilacs.

The *Queen of the West* setting sail from Liverpool on November 10, 1843, was scheduled for a stormy passage. The Sisters were the only ladies on board, so the ladies' cabin was assigned to them alone. A hurricane rocked the vessel for the first three days, the ship seemed doomed. Even the captain ceased to hope. At the height of the peril he begged Bishop O'Connor to "conduct a service." The bishop besought His Master, Who sent a great calm.

Alert to their duty, the Sisters ministered to the sick among the steerage passengers for that first week of the voyage. During the second week, the gentlemen organized a society called "The Atlantic Social and Literary Association of the good ship, *Queen of the West*." The president, Dr. O'Connor, urged the Sisters to become honorary members, admitted according to the by-laws.

How Frances Warde must have enjoyed these meetings where there was much good conversation reminiscent of the old days among her father's friends! Her Sister companions, all educated, cultured women, entered into its spirit, three of them contributing "essays of merit." Their exquisite refinement of manners contributed as much, perhaps, to this feast of reason.

In four weeks and two days, the *Queen* finally came in sight of land. The "ladies" remained on board until the next day, December 11, when Dr. O'Connor and Father Quarter, Bishop-elect of Chicago, escorted them ashore. As soon as introductions were finished, Father Quarter turned to Mother Xavier Warde and said, "As I have been the first to welcome you to the shores of the New World, I trust you will grant my first request and promise to establish in the new diocese of Chicago a house of your excellent Institute."⁴

Travelling to Philadelphia by rail, Mother Xavier Warde and her companions first found hospitality with the Sisters of Charity there. Among the many members of the clergy and laity who visited them was Miss Emily Harper of Baltimore, granddaughter of Charles Carroll, signer of the *Declaration of Independence*. Attracted to the young nuns at once, Miss Harper became a benefactress to many of the convents later established.

Over mountain tracks and deep ravines the stage coach rumbled along, carrying the Sisters to Pittsburgh, the first foundation in the United States. Their convent was in complete readiness by December 25, 1843, when the birth of the order in this country and the commemoration of the birth of the Savior coincided.

For the first eight months, the Sisters spent most of their time in extensive visitation of the sick. Mother Xavier Warde conducted adult convert classes, soon so numerous that she was assisted by her nuns day and night. At that time, one Bishop and three priests ministered to nearly half the State of Pennsylvania. Many were in need of private instruction to whom the clergy could not attend.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 63.

Here Mother welcomed her first American postulant, Miss Eliza Tiernan. She followed Mother McAuley's precedent of having the reception ceremony in the Cathedral. Many postulants came to her and soon the works of the Institute were flourishing, though on a small scale, judged by modern standards.

Bishop O'Connor desired a "select academy" to be erected in his diocese. He presented his request to the community, but only Mother Xavier Warde, who so well knew the mind of her foundress on this subject, agreed with him. The other Sisters believed their services were too much needed among the poor and needy to consider the project. Finally, when Catherine McAuley's attitude in the matter was explained to them, they agreed to the undertaking. To further satisfy the mind of all on this point, Bishop O'Connor laid before Rome the matter of undertaking such schools as a work of the Order. Cardinal Barnabo gave his willing sanction. It was "a work of Mercy to instruct the ignorant, rich and poor, there being little hope otherwise of obtaining educated subjects in America."⁵

So great was her need of subjects for her ever increasing work that Mother Xavier Warde sailed to Ireland in August, 1845, for more Sisters. She returned in December with four professed Sisters and two postulants. It was a wise move. Soon the great emigration was to fill her hands with more and more work and Father Quarter was importuning her for a Chicago foundation.

Finally in 1846, Mother Xavier Warde saw her way clear to respond to his request. On September 19, she and six Sisters, accompanied by the Bishop's brother, began the long journey from Pittsburgh to Chicago. Surely this episode in the life of the American foundress bids fair to equal any of the arduous journeys of her saintly patron. The party travelled on the Ohio River to Beaver, took a stage to Poland, Ohio, thence to Cleveland. Boarding the *Oregon* to complete the journey by water, they were asked to disembark at Detroit since there was no room for them. Passengers who had made reservations at Detroit some days previous to the Sisters were accommodated first. Left stranded on the shore where the Detroit River meets Lake Saint Clair between Lakes Erie and Huron, the group acquiesced to Father Quarter's suggestion to contact Bishop Lefevre of Detroit.

The prelate graciously afforded them hospitality until they reformulated their plans. From Detroit they travelled to Kalamazoo, thence to St. Joseph taking the steamer, *Sam Ward*, to Chicago. It appeared very much as though Our Lady had a hand in the delay, for her Sisters reached Chicago on September 24, her feast of Mercy.

Nor did the six-day journey culminate in the friendly welcome Father Quarter had expected. No one met them at the wharf, and as the priest led the Sisters to the northwest corner of Madison Street and Michigan Boulevard to the Bishop's "palace", he was tacitly disappointed.

They trudged along the pine sidewalks, rough, resinous; the young Sisters appalled, no doubt, at the loneliness of this frontier town, a sprawling settlement

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 92.

of five thousand inhabitants. We can readily imagine that they may have been just a little frightened at the faces they saw on that walk from the pier to St. Mary's wooden church. Trappers, rough longshoremen, deck hands, slaughter-house men, canal-diggers, even Indians perhaps stared at the lovely women, surely an astonishing sight in those days.

At her first glimpse of what Chicago had to offer in the way of a convent for her Sisters, Mother Xavier Warde's heart must have quailed. The church, the seminary, the Bishop's house were all very humble frame buildings; but where was the convent?

Bishop Quarter was coming forward to meet them. He had not been able to keep his pledge to have suitable accommodations in readiness for them. His church, his school, his seminary had depleted his own private fortune, \$4,000, and he was borrowing money now to meet additional payments.

Looking at the young women before him, eager to spread the kingdom of Christ in Chicago and now facing the crudity of the West, the Bishop's heart was filled with pity. Hastily, he decided to vacate his own house, and against the Sisters' protests, moved to a miserable shanty near the Cathedral. The thought of the nuns living in the rough home he had left for them caused him to spend a sleepless night. Had he been right in asking them to come? Was it fair to their youth and immaturity to expect them to shoulder a burden he himself found heavy enough?

Little did he know of what calibre these pioneer Sisters were formed, or the strength of the guiding hand of their foundress. In his anxiety, he hastened to the convent the next day to offer further apologies.

Mother Xavier Warde received him, sat listening attentively as with much evident embarrassment he began to offer his apologies and explain his misgivings. Then a sound reached the Bishop's ears, more welcome that morning than symphonic music would have been. It was the sound of laughter, gay, light, spontaneous, youthful. Mother Xavier Warde lowered her eyes and smiled slowly. They both understood there was no need for looking back regretfully. Nuns who are dejected or distrustful could not fill the tiny convent with happiness like that.

For Mother Xavier Warde was the faithful transmitter of Catherine McAuley's oft-repeated injunctions: "Place your whole confidence in God. He will never see you lack for means to do His work." Well had her young nuns learned the lesson.

Those early days in Chicago were no less a tribute to Mother Xavier Warde's wisdom and guidance than they were to the courage and enthusiasm of her young Sisters. Perhaps nothing illustrates this more clearly than the resourcefulness, ingenuity, and energy they exerted in making a school of the dilapidated frame building next to their crude convent.

These efforts to supply equipment for teaching could aptly be termed creative. Sending to Ireland for parchment, the old *Annals* record, they made maps, painted in water-colors. They fashioned globes by curving the willow branches into spheres, stretching parchment over them, then sketching and

coloring them. Blackboards were planed timber, formed in squares, nailed to the wall, and of course painted black.

For teaching arithmetic, they contrived numeral frames from squares of elm framework, strings of wire attached horizontally on which they strung small spools painted in primary colors. That tiny community must have been a workshop of school supplies: maps, charts, globes, frames, squares, cubes, cones, mucilage, cardboard, paints, brushes, scrapbooks, and much more gay laughter!

Mother began visitation of the sick, the poverty-stricken, the bereaved, the prisoners. The children whom they taught were a heterogenous group of sons and daughters of trappers, bordermen, hardy settlers, and some Indians. Mother Xavier Warde kept her Sisters entertained in after years with witty stories of these vivacious, bright, matter-of-fact sturdy young westerners. To the Indians, she was the "pale face mother" to whom they often returned for medals, rosaries, and gospels. Though she could not have understood the Indian language, she appeared to have been able in some degree to comprehend their meaning.

One day a little Indian girl came to the convent, volubly making some request of the portress who could not understand the message. When she referred her problem to the superior, Mother Warde said in her simple manner, "Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten me to do some good for souls."

The little girl ran to Mother as she entered the room, clung to her habit and in broken English tried to explain that her father was dying and wanted the "Blackrobe Chief." Mother sent for the Bishop who came at once, led by the little girl to her father's wigwam.

After several months, Mother Xavier Warde was recalled to Pittsburgh. Before she began that hazardous return journey, she gave a farewell exhortation to her Sisters. She chose as her theme, poverty, the seal of God's approval on all her foundations. She spoke of the poverty of Saint Francis de Sales who, though he lived in palatial residence, kept a dingy apartment for himself called "Francis' quarters." She stressed the attitude of Saint Charles Borromeo living in his castle as Cardinal and reserving an attic room for himself where he slept on straw and prayed. This was the "headquarters of Charles."

Impressed with her sincerity, the evident application to their own circumstances, and saddened at the loss of so devoted a Mother, her young people bade her farewell the next morning amid smiles and tears—and without any lunch for her journey!

Dressed as a secular once more, Mother Warde began that return journey to Pittsburgh. A cold sleet knifed its way earthward, lakes and rivers were frozen when she started by stage-coach. All the other passengers were rough-looking men; she was assigned to a compartment ordinarily used for the mail bags. She did not dare move from it during the first two days and nights of the journey. As the wilderness closed in upon them, the prevalence of black mud and quagmire necessitated the use of oxen to draw the wagon. The solitude seemed terrible to her, particularly during the long frosty night as the moon silvered the ashen prairie land, and across the stillness came the screech of a prairie chicken.

On the third day they reached Toledo. Exhausted, hungry, Mother Warde sought refreshment in its only hotel. Here she was recognized as a religious by an Irish servant girl who befriended her.

In an endeavor to attend Mass, Mother Xavier hired a coach to the nearest Catholic Church. But the driver and she were not of the same mind regarding the necessity of attending the Holy Sacrifice. Amid the swirling snow, piling high in drifts in the cold winter wind, the stage stopped after a short distance. Nothing, not even Mother's earnest pleading, would induce the driver to go farther. It was not like the American foundress to be daunted in realizing her purpose by such a thing as weather. Alighting, she walked the rest of the way to church. Here the priest, recognizing her as a religious, saw that she received hospitality until she left Toledo the next day.

From Toledo to Sandusky City, it was much the same story except that after a ten mile journey, the stage broke down completely. All vacated it except the "lady" who anxiously watched the men passengers work for two hours to extricate the coach from the mud. In two more hours they had it in running condition. So bleak and desolate a spot did Sandusky City appear then, that Mother did not dare venture into its hotel. She waited in the stage several hours until it started off again. During the night it was "swamped"; once more the men passengers were pressed into service. They borrowed two yoke of oxen from a farm to drag the coach from the ruts. Surely travelling in those days was a cooperative venture, though the teamworkers could not be said to have had the most excellent dispositions. In fact, the *Annals* record that they had recourse to loud profanity for which they were roundly reprimanded by the "lady."

At some distance farther they reached a steep hill above a deep ravine, where even their lives were in danger. They entered Brownsville towards evening. Mother set sail at midnight for Pittsburgh. Needless to say, when she reached the convent on a cold rainy winter morning, she was in the state of utter collapse. Dr. Addison found her in a seriously critical condition. She remained so for ten days when she finally began to recover.

In 1848 the dreadful typhus or ship fever struck. Though a new Mercy hospital was in course of construction in Pittsburgh during this time, an improvised hospital was opened in the district to care for victims of the epidemic.

The emigration had doubled their school attendance, visitation of the sick became more extensive, and now the dreaded ship fever made heroic demands on these first Sisters. Mother Xavier Warde spent hours in the hospital wards as did her small community. Eight of her precious subjects lost their lives in nursing this dread disease. Mother herself broke down under the strain of overwork and was ordered out of the hospital by the head physician, Doctor Addison.

In the same year, 1848, she founded a branch house at Loretto, a little village in the Alleghanies, Cambria County, Pennsylvania. It had been purchased in 1803 by Father Gallitzin, a Russian Prince-priest. He converted the territory into small farms which he sold to immigrants at a nominal price or gave to them when payment was impossible. His relatives in Russia and the King of Holland

helped finance this project. Prince Gallitzin renounced a large inheritance in becoming a Catholic and a priest, had chosen to work in this obscure village. The log-cabin of "Father Smith", as he called himself, was the center of much activity. Catholics numbered only twelve when he began his labors. At his death in 1840, he left 6,000 Catholics in Loretto besides converting others in the mountains and villages of the vicinity.

It was Bishop O'Connor who told Mother Xavier Warde the story of this heroic apostle, informed her of Father Gallitzin's great desire for Sisters to teach his mountaineers.

When, in 1851, she was forty-one years old, the foundress established Saint Xavier's Convent in Providence, Rhode Island. Since the subsequent chapters will present this material in fuller detail, it suffices here to note that six years elapsed between this and her next foundation in Rochester, New York, in 1857. Immediately the works of Mercy were inaugurated. Seven other convents were established from Rochester.

In 1857, too, Mother Warde's term of office as Reverend Mother expired. On account of the vacancy in the episcopal see—Bishop O'Reilly's successor had not yet been named—the administrator would not allow her to resign until after the consecration of the new bishop. On May 14, 1858, Bishop McFarland was consecrated; six weeks later Mother resigned her office to Mother Josephine Lombard.

Late in May of that year, Bishop Bacon of the New Hampshire diocese visited the Providence community. So sincere and eloquent was his portrayal of conditions in his diocese and so necessary did he deem the aid of the Sisters that he persuaded these zealous women at once. But as he himself pointed out, "Only the piety, courage, zeal and the hardihood of a pioneer religious will ever be able to *rough it* in the establishment of Catholic schools in Maine and New Hampshire."⁶

Piety, courage, hardihood . . . the terms were aptly associated with Frances Warde at this period of her life. Setting out on July 16 in 1858, Mother undertook again a mission made dangerous and difficult by the Know-Nothing Movement, particularly strong in Maine and New Hampshire. In New Hampshire she worked with Father McDonald, a priest whose views on bigotry were comparable to her own. Though his people had been persecuted since 1854 by the nativist movement, driven from their homes, their sick dragged into the streets, their furniture destroyed, his own Saint Anne's church attacked, yet he firmly believed in the good will and right intentions of the non-Catholic residents of Manchester.

Though his people opposed the move, he adhered to his conviction that Sisters could do much to help remove the misunderstanding at the root of bigotry. Realizing, however, that pioneer days would spell suffering and hardship, he did not minimize the danger when he presented his plans to Bishop Bacon. He built his convent. An attempt was made to demolish it. He kept

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 190.

on, even though both convent and church had to be placed under strictest guard until the building was completed. Here Mother and her companions took up their abode, calling it Mount Saint Mary's. They met undivided loyalty from the Catholic populace. Subsequent events proved Father McDonald right. Mother Xavier Warde established convert classes, the convent overflowed with these evening sessions. The Sisters began settlement work, in 1858 an academy was opened for resident students, non-Catholics were admitted. Gradually misunderstanding and bigotry gave way to an intellectual appreciation of and respect for Catholicism.

Even in her last days, Mother Warde retained her self-sacrificing interest in converts, instructing them when debility and ill-health would preclude further active work with them.

In 1861, a convent was established in Philadelphia where she remained until things were well organized. In 1864, she commenced the journey with her Sisters for the Omaha foundation, intending to retrace the route as far as Chicago, but was recalled to Manchester because of the illness of her assistant. From that time on, foundations multiplied: in 1865 she accompanied her Sisters to Bangor, Maine; in 1871 she sent a group to Yreka, California; in May, 1871, she brought her Sisters to the new mission in North Whitefield, Maine. Jersey City and Princeton were next on her agenda, in 1872 she founded a convent at St. Johnsbury, Vermont, later transferred to Burlington. Now there were Mercy convents in five New England States, all organized by her.

When she was nearly seventy years old, Mother found herself again involved in the education of the Indian. In 1878, Bishop Healy had requested Sisters for work among the Indians in Maine, and Mother had sent them there to their new convent, a wigwam of the Chief of the tribe who had vacated it for them. Early in the summer of 1879, Mother visited the mission. The chief rowed to meet her in a birchbark canoe. Since Mother betrayed her timidity in attempting the short cruise in so fragile a bark, he obtained a more substantial boat and rowed her across. The Indian children sang for the "great Mother", they presented her with gifts, brought their babies for her to bless. As the Chief and his braves escorted Mother and her companions to the shore before leaving, she had the happiness of knowing that nowhere were her Sisters more highly valued than at the Indian reservation at Pleasant Point and Dana's Point.

These were Mother's last foundations in Maine except Deering Academy founded in 1881. When she celebrated her golden jubilee in 1883, she was not only the oldest Sister of Mercy in the world, but one of the most zealous and untiring apostles of the new Order. At her coming to the United States fifty years before, there had been seven Sisters of Mercy in this country. She had lived to see them number thousands, their convents established in fifty-eight dioceses. Editorially, the *Boston Pilot* lauded this great American nun:

Of an energy both mental and physical, rarely possessed by any woman, she is gifted also with fervent piety and boundless charity. With zeal, courage, and firmness, are united prudence, dignity, affable address, and rare executive ability. Her bodily vigor has ever been remarkable, and

today, though three-score and ten years, she is the earliest in the chapel in the morning, and at all the spiritual exercises of the day, and is not excelled by the youngest and most ardent of her sisterhood in the regular duties that each day brings.

The vocation of a Sister of Mercy is varied and ample. Rev. Mother McAuley's conception and aim were to unite the active life of a Sister of Charity with the contemplative and devotional life of a Carmelite. Accordingly, the Sisters of Mercy teach and nurse, yet spend nearly six hours each day in united devotion.

Their rules of life are strict, and its duties unremitting—patient with youth, cheery with age, ministering to the sick and in prisons, inspiring fortitude, resignation, and hope, yet their personal and cloistered life is never neglected.

Rev. Mother Warde's choice, though made when so young, was no mistake. Her talents, her longings, her capacities were not wasted or treated lightly, but were respected and treasured; received as they were from God, to Him she consecrated them, offering herself unreservedly for His sake to the service of her fellow-beings. And today these gifts, and their use, and their fruitage are recognized, and are held up to a world that needs the lessons they convey. From all over America, from Europe, from the antipodes (Australia and New Zealand), congratulations and love-gifts pour in upon the last survivor of the original Baggott Street foundation.

During October and November of 1883, the voice of the old nun was still strong as her Sisters heard her answer the prayers in choir with her customary unction. In 1884, however, her sight failed, her once energetic stride became slow and enfeebled. When the senior Sisters from her many foundations came to visit their Mother in the summer of 1884, she could scarcely distinguish their faces.

"My long and stormy life is at last coming to an end", she told her companions often during the next few weeks. It was Father McDonald, friend and spiritual director for twenty-five years, who gave her the last Sacraments, prepared her for that final journey, the fulfillment of them all.

She set out for the fair fields of Heaven on September 17, 1884. As Father McDonald closed the sightless eyes, his own travelled about the poor cell. Was Francis Xavier's couch of branches and skins more ascetic, he wondered, than that of Mother Xavier's iron bed and hard mattress, her cell poor enough in appearance and equipment for the lowliest cabin?

To the end, she had gloried in her poverty and detachment, clean and shining weapons for her glorious apostolate.

Among the hills of New Hampshire her Sisters laid her to rest. Over her grave they placed a marble cross bearing the inscription:

Reverend Mother Mary Francis Xavier Warde, Foundress of the Order of Mercy in the United States, December 21, 1843, and of Mount Saint Mary's Convent, Manchester, New Hampshire, July 16, 1858. Died September 17, 1884, in the 74th year of her age and the 53rd of her religious profession.

Grant to her, O Lord, eternal rest . . .



RIGHT REVEREND BERNARD O'REILLY

CHAPTER FIVE

Seeding Time

ANYONE who is unfamiliar with the methods used to propagate Christ's kingdom with success should make a study of the beginnings of the Providence foundation of the Sisters of Mercy. Should there be any misapprehension regarding the age-old fact that Christ wants apostles, not conquerors, it would be well to watch the growth of His work in the diocese of Hartford, which in 1851, included Rhode Island and Connecticut, with the episcopal residence in Providence, Rhode Island.

The Right Reverend Bernard O'Reilly, then Bishop of Hartford diocese, had applied to Bishop O'Connor of Pittsburgh for Sisters. Apparently, he executed his plans for them with full cognizance of the serious consequences which might eventuate from the establishing of a convent in such a city where bitterness against things Catholic was at its height. He must have known the power of the Know-Nothing movement at the time.

On the other hand, he understood only too well the need for schools and homes for his orphans. Much correspondence passed between the Bishop of Hartford and the Bishop of Pittsburgh regarding the advisability of a move which would expose the nuns, perhaps, to the same fate as that of the Ursulines of the Charlestown Convent.

It was at length decided after much earnest prayer and consultation that they would brave the storm of protest and request the foundation for Providence. The Sisters faced the reality squarely, it would seem, realizing that insecurity, hostility, persecution, poverty, self-denial were to be their lot. In other words, they accepted the means whereby the kingdom of God thrives.

Bishop O'Reilly, indeed, promised as much security as was within his human power to concede. His contract with Mother Xavier Warde and her four Sisters read:

The Sisters from the Convent in Pittsburgh, leave for the Diocese of Hartford under the protection of the Right Reverend Doctor O'Reilly subject to the following conditions:

1st., That the Right Rev. Prelate from the hour that they become subject to his Jurisdiction, become the guardian of their existing Constitutions, Rules, Customs, Duties, etc., etc., and enforce by his canonical authority their observance.

2d., That the Right Rev. Prelate will introduce no new Rules, Customs, or Practices even though they be pious, or abrogate those established in the other houses of the Institute, that the series of duties, practices, etc., etc., in them observed is above all others conducive to the attainment of the end of our holy vocation, namely, the sanctification of the Sisters and the spiritual good of their neighbor.

3rd., That the Right Rev. Prelate will provide the Sisters with a habitation in which apart from all domestic interference with externs, they may have full opportunity of fulfilling their spiritual and charitable duties, and in which the Religious day will be marked by the sound of the bell, and the other forms in use.

4th., That the Right Rev. Prelate will not require any Sisters for a new establishment, until the number of the Sisters in the house arrive at the very least to the number of nine.

5th., That a moderate competency for their simple and religious mode of living in accordance with holy poverty be secured to them.

6th., That no secular be located in their house except for necessary or professional duty.

7th., That the Sisters be left full liberty in admission or dismissal of subjects according to the Constitutions.

8th., That the Confessor to whom their spiritual care is entrusted be their spiritual guide only, and be not authorized to interfere in their external government, usages, or occupations.

9th., That an agreement to these conditions is the compact on which the Sisters consent to leave Pittsburgh and on the fulfillment of them to persevere until death in the duties of their vocation in the new Convent at Hartford.

And on my own part and those of my successors I engage to provide for any professed Sisters in the Convent or any other founded in this Diocese competent support and maintenance according to their Rules and Constitutions.

✠BERNARD, BISHOP OF HARTFORD¹

Leaving Saint Xavier's in Pittsburgh on Ash Wednesday, March 10, 1851, the five Sisters were escorted to the pike where the stage coach would bring them to Providence. The wrench must have been severe, the lesson in detachment well learned, the impetus given to the new foundation a strong one. The Bishop, Sisters, and students bade them a tearful farewell. They exchanged cordiality for misunderstanding and hostility.

Dressed in secular clothes once again, Mother Xavier Warde, Sister M. Camillus O'Neil, Sister M. Josephine Lombard, Sister M. Paula Lombard and Sister M. Joanna Fogarty were literally smuggled into Providence. Prudence, caution, quiet were deemed indispensable for survival during many a day.

Arriving on March 11, they were shown to their little cottage just below the present Cathedral on High Street, now Weybosset. Holy Mass was celebrated there the next morning on the feast of the translation of the relics of Saint Francis Xavier. With what mixed feelings and utmost fervor those five Sisters must have offered the Holy Sacrifice with the priest that morning, the foundation day of the Rhode Island Community. In the midst of actual poverty as well as poverty of spirit, the religious women brought to that first Mass the sorrows of the poor they were to assist. They offered the hearts and minds of men to be purified from hate and prejudice. They remembered the Cross perpetuated in this Sacrifice, offered on this improvised altar and on the altars of their hearts.

¹This is an exact copy from the archives of the order, extant in Pittsburgh, Hartford, and Providence records.

They knew that from the Cross, they would gain their strength to go on at all costs.

Mother Xavier Warde, particularly, must have recognized with a spiritual joy her seal of success, poverty. She turned in submission to the Christ who loved the poor, to Him who prayed forgiveness for men because they were ignorant . . .

Bishop O'Reilly purchased the Stead Estate at the corner of Broad and Claverick Streets for the Sisters on May 28 and set to work to have it remodelled for a convent. Immediately the small community began to thrive. By August 27, 1851, it numbered twenty. One wonders how the housing problem was solved since the Stead Estate was not ready for use until October. Surely the aspirants were well grounded and exercised in self-denial.

At once visitation of the poor was begun. The Sisters met with joyous welcome from the people, who felt that they understood poverty because they shared in it. The fact that they lived in such a poor convent all but placed a halo on their supernatural character.

Though space was certainly inadequate for the purpose, in this first tiny convent Mother Warde opened an academy. There were twenty pupils in the two rooms, one used after school hours to enlarge the seating capacity of the chapel, the other to serve for a music room. From this nucleus, too, Sisters were sent to St. Patrick's parochial school to teach the girls.

Judged by any standard of comparison, the new convent on the corner of Claverick and Broad Streets was no mansion. Built of stone, it was more commodious than the first and, at the outset, more spacious. The Sisters occupied it in October, 1851. Their parlor, kitchen, and refectory, laundry, and coal bin were on the first floor; chapel, community room, and novitiate on the second floor; in the attic, five rooms used for the Sisters' cells.

Early records depict the chapel as "exquisitely clean," but very poorly adorned. The altar was "very plain, painted white . . . paper roses on tall sticks set in very plain vases, and some cheap candlesticks were the only adornment."² The Novitiate room was so small that a tall man standing in the center could reach out and almost touch the walls. The novices were crowded about a very narrow table . . .

Heated by a small stove and lighted by candles, the community room was furnished meagerly: a long table in the center, chairs, a bookcase, a piano.

Extending from the back of the stone house to Foster Street, a garden supplied some beauty and fresh air. Fruit trees shaded the grounds divided into flower and vegetable gardens. The "large" garden where the Sisters took their recreation was divided into squares by several walks bordered with dwarf box. A grape vine arbor near the center furnished a cool retreat in summer.

At the same time he had purchased the Stead estate, Bishop O'Reilly also bought a frame house in an adjoining lot. At once this was converted into an

²*Annals*, p. 392.



Mother Mary Xavier Warde
1851-1858



Mother Mary Josephine Lombard
1858-1861



Mother Mary Angela Fitzgerald
1861-1864

A Century of Superiors



Mother Mary Bernard Bead
1864-1870; 1872-1875;
1877-1886



Mother Mary Pauline Maher
1870-1872



Mother Mary Climacus O'Brien
1875-1877

Mother Mary Matthew Doyle
1916-1922; 1925-1936;
1942-1948



Mother Mary Thomasina O'Keefe
1886-1889

Mother Mary Mechtilde Brennan
1892-1898

Mother Mary Joachim Walsh
1904-1910

eadership
s 1851-1951



Mother Mary Luyola McDonough
1922-1925



Mother Mary Alexis Donnelley
1910-1916



Mother Mary Germaine Toomey
1889-1892; 1898-1904

Mother Mary Hilda Miley
1936-1942; 1948--

orphan asylum, one of the earliest Catholic establishments of the kind in New England.

Following Mother McAuley's established precedent, Mother Xavier Warde dared to have her first ceremony for reception of the habit as a public ceremony. Differing to some extent from the ceremonial used today, the reception attracted large crowds to the Cathedral in August, 1851. When one recalls that never before had anything of the kind been witnessed in the diocese, one can understand that it made a deep impression.

Led by the cross-bearer, a young lady dressed in white, the procession began with twelve tiny girls representing angels, in white dresses, and flower wreaths, carrying baskets of flowers. Postulants marched next in couples, behind them the older religious, their black habits partly concealed by their white serge church cloaks. All carried lighted candles and sang the triumphant "O Gloriosa Virginum." Climaxing the procession were the candidates to receive the white veil, conducted by the Reverend Mother and her assistant. These young girls were dressed as brides in spotless white; the gown, gloves, slippers, ribbons, laces in latest fashion, the white flowing veil caught with orange blossoms. They carried a "bridal" bouquet. To watch the solemnity of the ceremonial when these young ladies exchanged their worldly attire for the habit of a Sister of Mercy was an inspirational experience for the hushed and breathless spectators.

However, it is to be feared that the general reaction to this public ceremony was not altogether friendly. It was discussed for days, true; among Catholics it served to crystallize an attitude of reverence and friendliness already existing. It inspired other young women to embrace the religious life—in this it was successful. On the other hand, talk consequent upon the ceremony only solidified the incredulity and hostility of enemies. It stirred up a false sympathy for these lovely young women being immured behind convent walls.

Though the Sisters continued their work in the schools, with the orphans, and in visiting the sick, they were conscious of the enmity surrounding them. They knew one important fact, however, of which their assailants were ignorant. By a mysterious Divine Law, in accepting the insults proffered them, they were getting power over this world of bleak prejudice. These religious understood the ways of the Lord. If they ministered to the humble and despised, fed the hungry, visited the sick, bore with the forward, submitted to insult, endured ingratitude, rendered good for evil, they were digging deep foundations for the building of the kingdom of God. The more submissive they were, the more they abased themselves, the more they resembled Christ; so much the greater was their power with Him.

Insult and ridicule, even open attack were the order of the day. Boys threw stones at the Sisters when they met them on the street. "Gentlemen" reviled and cursed them as they passed. Others resorted to ridicule and derision as was the case of the well dressed young man who approached two Sisters in the street, genuflected before them saying melodramatically, "My cup of happiness is full!" One youth, dared by a bet, accosted two Sisters, seized one of

them, carried her to a street corner amidst the cheers and jeers of his companions, then dropped her unceremoniously, lauded by uproarious applause. Often their clothing was covered with the mud hurled at them, or marked with chalk as they passed.

An incident is told of one young Sister's reaction to a mob of youngsters who surrounded her. Facing her assailants, staring them out of countenance, she evidently reached the conclusion that patience was no longer a virtue. She quickly removed the caps of the boys, walked on briskly, pursued by loud cries of "Gimmie my cap! I want my cap!" She walked on, finally turning in to an open hallway where the bareheaded youngsters surrounded her, clamoring for the caps. She returned them and warned the culprits of what might happen to them in the future. For a long time Sisters travelling in that part of the city were unaccosted by street urchins.

Feelings of hostility against the community were aided and abetted by a series of letters in a local newspaper signed "Sentinel." These gave voice to thoughts defiling the minds of non-Catholics; they questioned the celibacy of the clergy, the secrecy of the confessional, the morality of nuns. No convent should be tolerated in this country, the sentinel insisted, without regular inspection by civil authorities. The writer at one time gave an account of a child who was enticed to walk by the nunnery on Broad Street, but who was,—thanks be to God!—opportunistically rescued.

When in 1854 a bill was introduced into the Assembly to secure a charter for Sisters' Orphan Asylum, and to remit taxation on the property to the amount of \$100,000, much discussion ensued. Was it wise, opponents questioned, to allow such a large exemption to those of Romish faith? In spite of opposition the bill was passed on February 23, 1854, but an amendment limited non-taxable property to \$50,000.³

An attempt was made by the Assembly in 1855 to give school commissioners visitorial powers over the nunneries. This was abandoned, however, because it was unconstitutional, and moreover, in the strict sense of the word, there were no "nunneries" in the diocese.

"Sam," as the Know-Nothing party was called, was soon supplied with a startling rumor of an outrage being perpetrated right in his own vicinity. Perhaps he was goaded to a sympathetic attitude to the story by a few lines of "poetry" recently published:

"She was a very pretty nun,
Sad, delicate, and five feet one . . .
Over her lips would come and go
A very mockery of woe—
A brief, wan smile—piteous token
Of a warm love crush'd and a young heart broken."⁴

³Dowling, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

⁴Quoted in same work.

Be that as it may, as Boston had its Rebecca Reed, Providence had its Rebecca Newell, in that both were the immediate occasions of a Know-Nothing attack on the convents.

The story runneth thus. Rebecca Newell, graduate of the local high school, recent convert to Catholicism, a woman in her late thirties, had applied to Mother Xavier Warde for admission to the order as a postulant. Fearing, perhaps, that her first fervor as a Catholic and the recent death of her brother led Miss Newell to seek admission, Mother explained the difficulties of the life to her. Miss Newell thought herself called to give it a trial; she, daughter of one of the most prominent American families in Providence.

At once her entrance was noised abroad. She was pictured as a guileless young thing, enticed by the fascinating Madame Warde, detained in the convent against her will. Stalwart Americans took up the cudgels. An end should be made of nunneries.

Placards invited "all true Americans" to the rescue. Handbills circulated throughout the city set the date for destruction of Saint Xavier's for March 22, 1855. The Sisters acted with utmost prudence. Miss Newell was allowed to see her friends or any interested person. She sent for the mayor and for the editor of the *Providence Journal*, talking freely to them. The city editor published the results of his investigation, a communication from Miss Newell herself, and an editorial warning "rowdies" that "Providence is not a city where mobs flourish."

Meanwhile, the convent was open to visitors, one of whom was the mayor of the city. He advised Mother Warde to allow Miss Newell to leave the convent.

"Not unless she wishes to go," the "fascinating Mother" replied.

"What, then, shall I do to preserve the peace of the city?" He pressed Mother for a reply. She answered him with a second question.

"Is it possible that Your Honor cannot assist in saving life and property in the event of a riot?"

The mayor believed himself powerless in the face of his fellow-citizens who had determined to blow up the convent. He begged her and the community to leave quietly. She refused, be it said to her eternal credit.

Meanwhile, Bishop O'Reilly anticipated trouble, and rightly so. Newspapers of the day carried sensational stories of the loss of life in anti-Catholic riots. In Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Saint Louis, Louisville, New York, such were the dire results of these altercations that the word "riot" would make any Bishop wary. He insisted on protection from city and state authorities. Though they promised to be ready for an emergency, he thought it wise to call on his own people to protect his nuns. They responded in great numbers, armed with hastily improvised weapons. The Bishop himself prepared for the worst. He formulated his will, sent it and all his important papers to Hartford.

The Sisters, also, really believed they might meet death that night. Though several offers of hospitality and refuge had come to Mother Xavier Warde from

both Catholics and Protestants, she assured them of her trust in God. If indeed He should demand the sacrifice of their lives, they would assemble in the chapel and offer them at the altar.

Hundreds of men arrived at the convent, took their places in the garden according to orders. From every man Mother Warde exacted a promise to refrain from shooting unless necessity demanded that the order be given. They agreed, if reluctantly. Other men took their places within the convent, their guns or other weapons lay on the floors, chairs, and tables.

Outside in the clear moonlight of that frosty night, a large crowd was gathering, reinforced by Know-Nothings from Boston, Salem, and Taunton. They demanded that Rebecca Newell be released to them. Reviling the name of Mother Xavier Warde, the crowd jeered. At the third demand, the Bishop stepped forth exclaiming, "The Sisters shall not leave the house . . . I will protect them with my blood if need be." Mr. Stead, former owner of the convent property, took his place beside Bishop O'Reilly. He corroborated His Excellency's statement adding that "there are four hundred strong Irishmen, armed with deadly weapons within the enclosure of the garden walls. At the least attempt at violence, they will defend the convent . . ." The riot act was read by the mayor.

The crowd faced this turn of events in silence. Apparently there was no leader among them to instigate them. They had come to maraud defenseless women; four hundred armed men were beyond their calculations. Gradually the crowd dispersed. There was some stone-throwing and hissing, but no more; Providence was spared the shame of an anti-Catholic riot.

Perhaps it should be added as a postscript that Miss Rebecca Newell did not persevere in religious life, though she always remained a fervent Catholic.

Neither did the Know-Nothings succeed in their attempt to oust the Sisters from Providence, nor did they deter further attempts toward Catholic education in the diocese.

Work on the new building at Saint Xavier's went on apace. The influence of the Sisters spread, more schools were opened by this intrepid first group under so courageous a leader as Mother Xavier Warde. Before she left for New Hampshire in 1858, she opened five more schools from Saint Xavier's; Saint Patrick's, Providence, in 1851; Saint Catherine's, Hartford, and Saint Mary's, New Haven, in 1852; Saint Mary's, Newport, and Saint Joseph's, Providence, in 1854.

Mother's enthusiasm mounted as she saw the work of God thrive. After a visitation to the branch houses in Hartford and New Haven, she wrote in her journal: "My desire to see Christ's little ones trained under the guidance of religious teachers is coming to pass to an extent far beyond what I ever dared to hope or wish . . . When I offered myself to God and to my Superiors to help to spread the works of our Institute on the American Missions, I did not dream of the good to be done in educating the grand, sturdy, New England character."⁵

⁵*Life*, p. 177.

Surely nothing could be deduced from that statement except that the Sisters were eager to enrich the minds of Americans whom they respected. They harbored no ill will against their persecutors, knowing that sincere apostles must suffer in order to promote God's work and to eradicate prejudice. Mother instilled into her nuns her own belief that the education of youth was the most apostolical of all good works. "What work is so Godlike," she would insist, "as the care of the development of these young intellects, and the cultivation of their pure hearts, by planting deep within them the germs of virtue and piety."⁶

It seems safe to conclude that the zeal of these early religious was kindled and made effective by a series of talks Mother always gave to her teachers. No doubt her educational tenets prevailed in a large measure in all of these early schools. Her ideal of a religious teacher was very high, nothing short of excellence was sufficient for God's children. Indeed, she held that each Sister was the Angel of the children under her charge, the keeper of their innocent hearts, in which she must sow the good seed of the Word of God.

"If the religious teacher is not thoroughly imbued with a burning love of God, how can she cultivate virtue in children?" she would exhort when stressing the necessity of cultivating the spirit of prayer and recollection.

She brought before them what had been her favorite childhood dream picture: Christ, taking the little ones on His knee, blessing and caressing them while the "great" and "wise" were forced to stand and wait.

Servite Domino in laetitia, the Sisters chanted each evening during the Office at Lauds. *Serve the Lord in joy!* She wished them to make this a reality during each day.

"Since God loves a cheerful giver," she would repeat, "let us try to be cheerful *workers*, taking nothing away from the glory of His blessed service by half-heartedness in the discharge of our duties. We must be steeped in holy joy and eagerness to imitate our Divine Model in performing the lowly offices of labor and prayer, of teaching and instructing . . ."⁷

Desiring her teachers to remember their special duty as Sisters of Mercy, she would remind them that "the poor are the especial friends of Jesus Christ, and should be the particular charge of the Sisters of Mercy, as mercy cannot be practiced on those who are living in affluence. . . . Let us do good to rich and poor, but always prefer the service of the destitute and suffering, as did Our Divine Master while here on earth."⁸

Mother herself, in her own teaching experience, had found the application of certain principles successful. Others she had formulated in her close association with Mother Catherine McAuley. Perhaps most basic in her method of character training was her belief that human nature needs to be trusted. Whenever she found it necessary to correct, she also made the person feel that she had a high estimate of her worth.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

Church Work



Here Sisters perform their duties as sacristans in the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul. They care for the altar and its appointments, the sacred vessels, and the vestments of the clergy. On a smaller scale, this "church work" is taken care of by the Sisters in every parish in the diocese where they are located.

Sunday School and Instruction Classes

Instruction in Christian doctrine is given to youngsters in Sunday, catechetical, and vacation schools throughout the State. Children are taught their prayers, appropriate hymns, and are prepared for the Sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation. Annually, a May procession is planned to honor the Mother of God.



Sister rehearses the girls in singing for Mass at the chapel in Quonset, R. I., naval base.

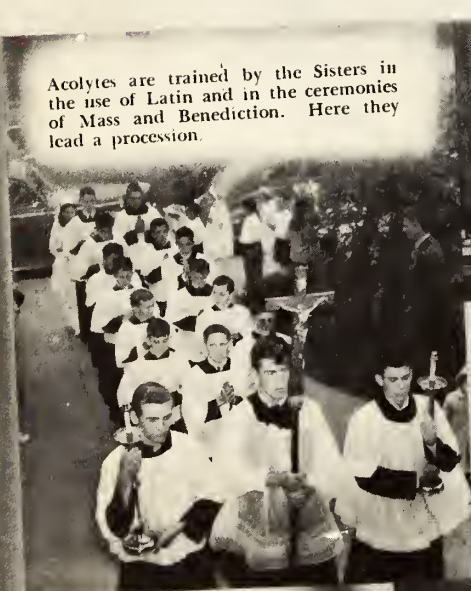


Boys endeavor to learn the truths of faith.



A typical May procession enters the church.

Acolytes are trained by the Sisters in the use of Latin and in the ceremonies of Mass and Benediction. Here they lead a procession.



Sister takes practice for the ceremony of First Holy Communion.

Always she disapproved of severe punishment; it destroyed honest sentiment, degraded the mind, rendered the heart untractable. Rather did she hold that love and the fear of losing the esteem and good opinion of teacher and parents were the best controlling forces in the schoolroom. Light punishments administered with firmness might be used effectively: removing a child from a section of "honor," suspension of small charges given to children as rewards, loss of merits.

As constructive measures to insure good conduct, Mother Warde believed that the teacher should instill fear of God, of His displeasure, of His punishments. She herself based her method of character formation on the commandments in general but more particularly on honesty: honesty in thought, word, deed. In training the children to compare their conduct with the objective standards of the universal moral law, she fostered truth and sincerity, exerting every effort to obviate falsehood and deceit.

"To instruct is an easy matter," she would say, "but to educate requires ingenuity, energy, and perseverance without limit."⁹

Judicious praise, a merit system, useful and constant employment of time, encouraging the spirit of emulation among pupils were important features of successful education. Plans should be ingenious, presentation of matter interesting, if a teacher would obtain favorable results.

Ingenuity was surely a most important quality in her teachers if they were to improve the interior decoration, lighting, and comfort of those early classrooms. Church basements and vestries with their improvised equipment, benches for pupils, poor lighting and ventilation do not form the most excellent background for effective teaching and discipline. Yet even with surroundings such as these, parents were glad to send their children to the Sisters.

Regarding grammar school subjects, the Sisters emphasized the fundamentals. School opened at 9 a.m., and continued until 12; the afternoon session opened at 2 p.m. and closed at 4 p.m. During that time, catechism, arithmetic, history, geography, English grammar, spelling, and penmanship were studied. Mother Xavier Warde attached much importance to education in social etiquette. Children were practised in courtesy; there were daily lessons in correct positions for sitting, walking, and standing, practise in graceful carriage, bowing, repose of manner, and in the essentials of good breeding. Girls were given lessons in homemaking according to Mother McAuley's earnest desire. They were taught to knit, darn, sew, and later, when adequate equipment could be obtained, to plan and cook meals.

Mother Xavier Warde placed emphasis on two extra-curricular activities: the teaching of music and the cultivation of good reading habits. Wherever she made a foundation, she organized a library. A firm believer in the benefits of a circulating library, she taught her Sisters to instill a taste for good reading.

In keeping with this latter idea, nearly all the early Sunday Schools organized a library, though often on a very small scale. The case of the first one established in the Cathedral Sunday School is typical of the success of this project

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 114.

in many other places. As early as 1855, donations were given to the Sister Directress to purchase a few volumes as a nucleus for this first rental library. So eager were her students, that the entire collection was in circulation every week. As profits accumulated, additional books were purchased, more shelves built, and an assistant librarian appointed. In less than two years, there were more than four hundred books on the shelves. The success of the undertaking began to encroach too much on the Sisters' time, and in 1858, a few young men of the Sunday School assumed the responsibility of management.

In the early Sunday Schools, a monitorial system was used since the classes were too large to be handled by the Sisters alone. Grouped according to age, the children were taught by laymen and women under the supervision of the Sisters. In 1855, societies had been formed for the children of the Cathedral parochial school: the Children of Mary, the Angel Guardian, and the Infant Jesus sodalities. These exerted so splendid an influence over the children that the Right Reverend Bernard O'Reilly suggested they be transferred to the Sunday Schools, thus giving their influence a wider scope.

The first May procession, as we know it today, was held in 1893 in the Cathedral Sunday school. Each sodality, wearing the insignia proper to it and headed by an appropriate banner, marched in procession singing hymns. An Act of Consecration and crowning of the statue of the Blessed Virgin followed. An exhortation by a priest preceded Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The general program has been repeated each year and at the present time has deviated only slightly from the original.

It will be remembered that when Bishop O'Reilly sought the Sisters of Mercy for his diocese, one of his chief reasons for so doing was to provide care for the orphans. The first asylum, which he had provided next to the convent, was a one and one-half story frame building. It was soon crowded, numbering among its members children from both Connecticut and Rhode Island, then comprised in the Hartford diocese.

When Mother Warde and four Sisters from Providence opened Saint Mary's parish school in New Haven in 1852, they also began a small orphanage in the convent. On the very day the Sisters arrived in the Elm City, May 12, 1852, two little girls presented themselves at the convent, seeking a home. Thus begun, work with the orphans at Saint Mary's continued until it was no longer possible to accommodate so many children in the convent and they were transferred to Saint Francis Orphan Asylum. As a consequence, children belonging in New Haven were withdrawn from the Claverick Street Asylum, but their places were almost immediately filled.

It was an easy matter for Bishop O'Reilly to note the increase in the number of orphans, for they attended Mass at the Cathedral each Sunday. The little girls, wearing white sunbonnets in summer or their blue hoods in winter, sat close to the sanctuary in full view of their Bishop. When their number reached thirty-two, he knew the capacity of the small asylum was tested to its limit.

When the Bishop discussed his plans with Mother Xavier Warde, she requested that he add ten feet to the original dimensions for use as a boarding

school. He agreed to this, plans were altered, and the building now known as Mercy Hall was commenced in the spring of 1855, completed in 1856, dedicated on the Feast of the Ascension as "Saint Mary's of the Ascension."

How spacious the new building must have seemed! The greater number of orphans were moved into Saint Mary's of the Ascension; only the very young children still lived in the cottage. Refectories for the orphans and boarders in the academy were located in the basement of the new building. The first floor had two rooms; one a parlor where the orphans saw their visitors, the other, the orphans' school room. On the second floor was Saint Xavier's Academy, comprised of two rooms also; a classroom and a parlor. The young ladies dormitory was on the third floor, the sleeping apartments for older orphans on the fourth floor. A second addition was made to this structure in 1865, the entire building is now known as Mercy Hall.

In 1855, a second orphanage was opened in Hartford. Saint Catherine's convent, the first convent of Mercy there, was commodious enough to provide for a few orphan girls. This somewhat relieved conditions at the Claverick Street orphanage.

In order to staff his schools and orphanages more efficiently, Bishop O'Reilly sailed for Europe on December 5, 1855, in search of priests, religious, and Christian Brothers. Succeeding, he sailed from Liverpool January 23, on the ill-fated *Pacific*. As he was never heard from again, it was concluded that he had lost his life in the sinking of this steamer.

For two years the diocese remained without a bishop, its administration under Very Reverend William O'Reilly, the late bishop's brother. With his sanction, in 1857, Mother Warde loaned two Sisters to the community of Little Rock, Arkansas. In the same year, too, Bishop Timon, C. M., Bishop of Buffalo, appealed to the administrator for a small number of his religious to begin the works of Mercy in Rochester, New York. Father O'Reilly had at one time been Vicar-General under Bishop Timon in Buffalo and was keenly aware of conditions there. He could not refuse the request for Sisters. Accordingly, Mother Xavier accompanied six of her Sisters to Rochester, New York, in May, 1857.

This was the first of the four foundations made from the Providence Motherhouse at Saint Xavier's while they formed part of the diocese of Hartford. The Manchester foundation of 1858 has already been mentioned in the chapter on Mother Xavier Warde's life. A third foundation was made to Saint Augustine's, Florida, in 1859 and to Nashville, Tennessee in 1866. The latter foundation was requested by Bishop Patrick Feehan of Nashville. Five Sisters braved the hardships of the Reconstruction Period in the South. Since the time that each colony branched from the Motherhouse, they have since maintained most cordial relationships with the Providence community.

On March 14, 1858, the Right Reverend Francis McFarland was consecrated. During his episcopate, the first generation of children of the immigrants found themselves still encumbered with church debts incurred by their parents. Though

priests urged the building of schools and people realized the need of them, still the churches were unpaid for; during the Civil War prices soared, and adequate provision for schools became virtually impossible.

This fact explains why the Sisters were asked to staff only five schools in the diocese between 1858 and 1872. Of these, all but one had functioned previously under lay administration. Saint Mary's, Pawtucket, had already been in progress since 1855 when the Sisters were asked to come there in 1862. In 1867, they took over the teaching in Saint Peter's, Hartford, inaugurated by seculars in 1860. They staffed Saint Patrick's, New Haven and Saint Charles, Woonsocket in 1869, both already under lay management since 1853 and 1859 respectively. In 1862, the Sisters took up work in the Immaculate Conception parochial and Sunday schools. Financially, the people found it next to impossible to support a school and even a small faculty. Perhaps this explains, too, why the Sisters opened a small academy in many of these new places. They could become, in a measure, self-supporting when parish funds were too inadequate to provide sufficient maintenance.

Yet in 1861, Bishop McFarland purchased land on Prairie Avenue in South Providence and began the construction of the Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum with Saint Aloysius as its patron. It was finished in 1862. The annual Orphan's Fair, begun in Bishop O'Reilly's administration, netted very large sums in Bishop McFarland's time, particularly in the period of post-war prosperity. The new home was indeed palatial in comparison to the orphans' early accommodations. When it was open for inspection in 1862, it was deemed one of the most beautiful and best equipped buildings in Providence. At the end of March, transfer of the orphans from Claverick Street to Prairie Avenue took place. Henceforth, both boys and girls were admitted.

Soon conditions were overcrowded. Although the opening in 1864 of Saint James' orphan asylum for boys in Hartford caused many to withdraw from the Providence asylum, still the number of orphans averaged about two hundred. Between 1865-70 an addition was made to the original structure; the old church of Saint Bernard was purchased, moved back on the Asylum land and remodelled for use. In 1867 an Industrial School was begun in the Asylum building; it was discontinued in 1870 because the room was needed.

It was in this same year, 1870, that Bishop McFarland was called to Rome to attend the Vatican Council. Here he discussed the need for division of the Hartford diocese now growing too large for the administration of one man. In 1872, Hartford and Providence became distinct sees. In a farewell speech, Bishop McFarland pointed out that since Bishop Tyler's time the progress of Catholicity in the diocese had been rapid. "The 8,000 Catholics have become more than 200,000 with 100 churches and 111 priests."¹⁰

Bishop McFarland changed his residence to Hartford. The Reverend Mother, Mother Mary Pauline Maher, and her assistant, Mother Mary Angela Fitzgerald, likewise left Saint Xavier's to establish the Motherhouse of the Hart-

¹⁰Duggan, Rt. Rev. Thomas S., *The Catholic Church in Connecticut*, p. 94.

ford diocese in the capital of Connecticut. The Sisters were free to choose between the two dioceses. Nearly all remained where obedience had assigned them at the moment. Thus, seventy Sisters formed the Hartford community. On the first Sunday of July, 1872, Reverend Mother Mary Pauline officially inaugurated her term of office as the first Mother Superior of the Hartford Sisters of Mercy. Since this date, the Hartford Sisters have been considered a distinct religious body, affiliated with Saint Xavier's in Providence only in the strong love and devotion that has ever since existed between them.

Pope Pius IX chose Thomas Francis Hendricken, a pastor in Waterbury, Connecticut, to be the first bishop of Providence diocese, then encompassing Rhode Island and the southeastern part of Massachusetts.

If it was with genuine regret that the people of Providence parted with their beloved Bishop McFarland, it was with even greater sadness that the Sisters of Mercy saw him depart. He had been to them everything connoted by the term "father"; he had taken an active interest in their schools, had amply provided for their orphan asylum, and had taken a personal interest in their own spiritual and educational progress. Older members of the community recall traditions of his assembling the Sisters at the motherhouse for spiritual conferences, of his personal concern for their sick. He coached members of the community who wished to improve their knowledge of Latin, visited their classrooms frequently, examined and encouraged the children in their studies.

The serious duty of electing a new Reverend Mother for the Providence Community now engaged the attention and prayer of the Sisters. Mother Mary Bernard Read was chosen the first Mother Superior. She had entered Saint Catherine's Convent, Baggott Street, Dublin, Ireland, was sent to Mother Xavier Warde for Saint Xavier's Convent, and was professed there in 1854. The task confronting her in her new office was not an easy one. Her community depleted in membership, the need for Sisters to do its work daily increasing, she saw before her conditions that challenged her fortitude and confidence in God. From a purely natural point of view, it would seem that she was to be overwhelmed with failure. Yet God did not fail these Sisters. The roots had gone deep into the soil since the first days of seeding. Transplanting thinned the furrows for a time, but only to strengthen them for future harvesting.



Making Altar Breads

Altar breads, used in Catholic churches throughout the diocese for subsequent consecration into the Sacred Species, are made in large quantities at the Mother of Mercy Novitiate. Novices, under the direction of a professed Sister, every week supply at least 60,000 small and 3,000 large altar breads to local parishes. Pictures illustrate the process. Novices mix a batter of flour and water to the proper consistency. They place a spoonful of batter on the plate of each electric baking machine, closing and fastening the cover. After they trim excess batter from the sides of the machine, they remove the sheet. After they trim excess batter from the sides of the machine, they remove the sheet of unleavened bread. Humidifying follows, when they dampen these sheets to avoid chipping them when cutting. The lower picture shows Sisters cutting and stamping small hosts and allowing them to fall into wire baskets. They will check carefully both large and small hosts before counting them for orders. Altar breads are placed in boxes lined with tissue, then securely wrapped and mailed or delivered as requested.

CHAPTER SIX

Growth and Expansion

TRULY the episcopate of Bishop Hendricken began inauspiciously, though at the end of his life in 1886 it could be said with certainty that the Church in the diocese of Providence "had passed out of the state of probation, and out of the days of anxiety and had become a widely-established, vigorous organism."¹ He had to cope with the panic of 1873 and its far-reaching results; the Fall River part of his diocese needed organization into parish units; there was the problem of caring for the influx of French and Portuguese; and his great ambition was to build a Cathedral for the new diocese.

Coming at a period of prosperity, the panic of 1873 was caused by the extensive loans made by the banks to the Western railroads. Railroad corporations could not meet their obligations, banks were insolvent, disastrous failures followed. In the midst of the bishop's plans for his new cathedral, the business of Amasa Sprague, the "cotton king," failed. The Spragues had built up Rhode Island, had much to do with making Providence a thriving city. Their financial interests were enormous, their failure disastrous. Amasa Sprague had been a benefactor of the Rhode Island Catholic Orphanage, had donated to Catholic charities, had supplied many Catholics with a livelihood. The Bishop purchased a site of land next to Saint Xavier's Convent for a pro-Cathedral and an episcopal residence. Aware of conditions, Bishop Hendricken visited parishes everywhere in his diocese and continued collecting.

Organization of new parish units also became incumbent upon the new Bishop. Forseeing the necessity of more schools, Sunday schools, and instruction classes, he conferred with Mother Mary Bernard Read, Mother Superior for all but two years of his episcopate. Since her community had been so depleted by illness, he suggested that she go to Ireland for postulants, or possibly for professed Sisters if they could be spared. So Mother Mary Bernard and her Mistress of Novices, Mother Mary Vincent O'Sullivan, sailed to Ireland in the early summer of 1873. Remarkable success attended her requests. Some of the most gifted future Sisters of Mercy returned to Saint Xavier's with the two Mothers; others followed later as soon as arrangements could be made.

It was well that they were successful! For between 1872 and 1886, the term of Bishop Hendricken's administration, the Sisters staffed sixteen new Sunday schools, seven new parochial schools, and opened Saint Joseph's Hospital in New Bedford.

Bishop Hendricken continued his predecessor's concern for the orphans. In a small cottage on the grounds of the Rhode Island Catholic Orphanage,

¹Dowling, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

he established a "nursery" for young children. He frequently visited the Orphanage, making the children's welfare his special care. He made extensive improvements there. He also saw the need for providing for the orphans in Fall River, so Saint Vincent's Home was opened there and placed in charge of the Sisters of Mercy.

Saint Joseph's Hospital in New Bedford had been remodelled from the Russell Estate in that city. In 1873, it was first placed under the direction of Reverend Lawrence McMahon with the Sisters of Mercy from Providence in charge. The building is now used as Saint Joseph's Convent.

Community property increased in proportions when, in 1874, land was purchased for Bayview Seminary, a boarding school for girls. Mother Mary Bernard thus sought to accommodate the increasing enrollment of day students at Saint Xavier's by removing the resident students. When, in the fall of 1874, about sixty boarders entered Bayview, Saint Xavier's henceforth opened to day pupils only. The Bishop not only encouraged Catholics to send their daughters to Bayview, but gave full approval to the Reverend Michael McCabe, Vicar General, to sponsor a gift from the diocesan clergy, a second large building erected in 1875.

Saint Mary's was placed in charge of one of the most gifted and eminently successful teachers at the time, Sister Mary Juliana Purcell, who as the sterling educator, the kindly light, guided lonely and sometimes motherless youth. She remained at Bayview until the opening, in 1883, of Saint Joseph's High School in New Bedford, when she was appointed directress of the new school there.

Bishop Hendricken did not live to see his Cathedral completed. Never a strong man, his health gave way under the burden of work and he died in 1886. The first ceremony in the beautiful new Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral was his own Requiem Mass. He lies buried in the crypt beneath the high altar.

During the administration of the next Bishop, the Most Reverend Matthew Harkins, (1887-1921) progress continued for the Sisters. As early as 1890 Tyler School was built and opened, merging Lime Street Grammar School and South Street Primary. To the Sisters who taught in the earlier Cathedral School buildings, this was an important step in advancement. But perhaps the most far-reaching improvement was the building of a new Motherhouse at Saint Xavier's.

Under the gentle and saintly Mother Mary Mechtilde Brennan, this latter project was undertaken in 1894. Mother was compelled to face the issue of expansion by reason of the growth of her community. Saint Xavier's convent was becoming more inadequate year by year to house young women who entered the community. In 1892, tuberculosis took its toll of young lives when ten Sisters died as victims of this disease. Though medical science was unable to cope with tuberculosis as it does today, Mother knew that a more spacious convent building was a necessity. Accordingly, the old stone building on the corner of Broad and Claverick Streets was demolished to make way for the new; the Sisters used Mercy Hall as convent quarters during the interim. During the

early summer of the previous year, a New Convent Building Association had been formed, with Reverend John Harty as director and Honorable George J. West as president. On September 23, 1894, the cornerstone was laid by the Right Reverend Bishop in the presence of a large assembly of clergy and people.

For two years, the worry and anxiety of obtaining sufficient funds, of planning construction, of conferring with architects and workmen continued. Mother Mary Mechtilde and her Sisters were greatly indebted to both Father John Harty and Mr. George J. West all during the progress of the structure. Both these benefactors assisted her in planning, advising her in matters of architecture, in interior decoration. In the summer of 1896 on the first Friday of July, the building was blessed by Reverend Father Harty before it was occupied by the Sisters. The Sisters have always been happy to remember that this ceremony was performed by the priest who had never once failed in his devotedness, his generous service, and his advice at a time when they were most needed.

Reverend Father Harty accompanied Mr. Joseph Banigan through the Convent, showing him the fine workmanship and architecture. This gentleman, the "Rubber King", left his contribution, a check for \$25,000, to be used for the new chapel. This gift, coming on the eve of the Feast of Saint Mechtilde, was surely a feast day gift directly from God.

Saint Xavier's chapel, a gem of architecture and decoration, is the result of the study of Reverend Father Harty. He travelled abroad to obtain its stained glass windows, works of liturgical art from the Hardman Company, Birmingham, England. The Stations of the Cross are painted after Durer and are copies of those in Antwerp Cathedral, Belgium. The entire oratory is sometimes alluded to as a "Lady Chapel" since its windows and interior decorations recall some phase of Our Lady's life or some quotation or symbolism connected with it.

In 1901, when the golden jubilee of Saint Xavier's was celebrated, two privileges were requested by Mother Mary Germaine Toomey, then Mother Superior: a privileged altar and Exposition on the First Friday of every month. Both were granted. Hence, on the "privileged altar" in the convent chapel, a plenary indulgence may be gained for any soul in Purgatory for whom a Mass on that altar is offered.

Evidences of progress were apparent also in Saint Xavier's Academy. Though the school continued to include among its registrants pupils from the primary through high school grades, emphasis was being placed on improving the high school. Bishop Harkins equipped a chemical laboratory and a physics classroom in 1899. In the same year, too, Sister Margaret Mary Donworth, a member of Saint Xavier's faculty, organized the Saint Frances de Sales Reading Circle, at the wish of Bishop Harkins. It counted twenty-five young women of the city in its first enrollment with Miss Clara Craig as its first president. Later this small association expanded and today is known as the Catholic Woman's Club, counting hundreds among its members.

Pope Pius X divided the Providence See again in the Spring of 1904, forming the Diocese of Fall River with the Most Reverend William Stang as its first

Bishop. Saint Catherine's Convent became the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Mercy there with Mother Mary Mechtilde Brennan as the first Reverend Mother.

Advancement in education, teacher training, and method keynoted the progress of the Mercy Community. Six new schools were opened, the same number of Sunday Schools, Mercy Home and School in Newport was taken over in 1915 by the Sisters in their service of the orphans, additional property was purchased at Saint Xavier's, at Bayview, and at Mount Saint Rita. After World War I, the Sisters were pressed into service at hospitals during the terrorizing influenza epidemic.

Sister Mary Bartholomew Clark was appointed in 1920 as Community Supervisor for Grade Schools by Reverend Mother Mary Matthew Doyle. With the Bishop's approval, this supervision was calculated to help the classroom teacher, to further study in more modern pedagogical methods, to benefit the children under the Sisters' tutelage. Sister's labors were prodigious, her work for the Community of incalculable proportions.

It was she who inaugurated the now state-wide observance of Rhode Island Independence Day on May 4. To this end, she compiled in 1904, the first year of the observance, a booklet for the pupils of Cleary Grammar School "which has the honor of being the first school in the state to observe Rhode Island Day exercises," the foreword states. Contained in her compilation are valuable notes on the geography and history of the state.

Sister Mary Bartholomew was supervisor only six years, from 1920-1926, the year of her death. God's call came before she or her friends expected it, yet she had compressed the energetic, intensive, wholehearted service of a lifetime in the years measured out to her from her Heavenly Father. Since 1926, the office of Community supervisor has been ably filled by Sister Mary Louise O'Brien, R.S.M.

The Rhode Island Catholic Deaf Mute Society was formed by Bishop Harkins in 1908. Sisters who had been qualified by previous work instructing Catholic children coming from the Rhode Island Institute for the Deaf now gave catechetical instruction once a week to members of the new organization. A class in braille was also formed; Sisters from Saint Xavier's studied this subject in order to be able to transcribe books for the blind.

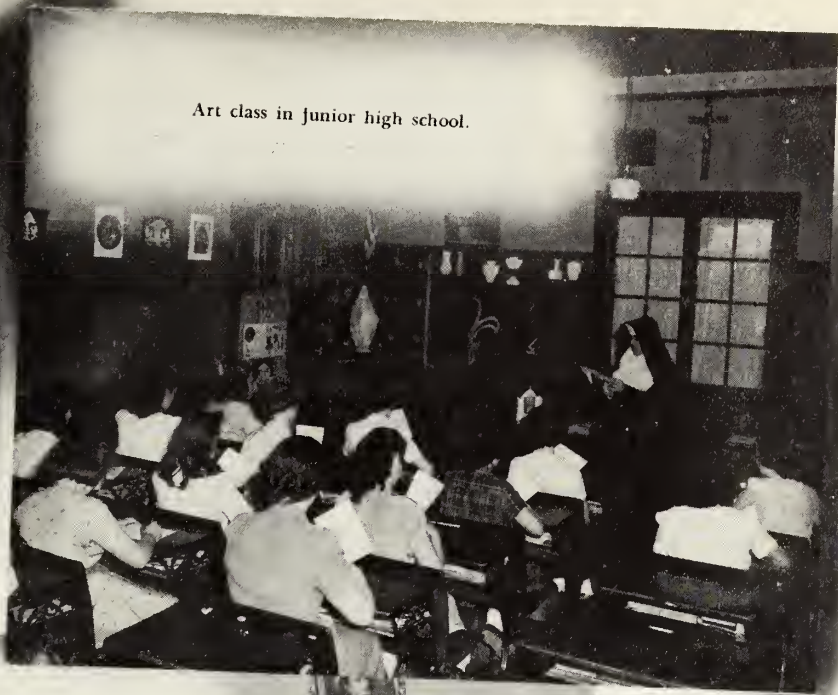
Mercy Home and School was opened in Newport in 1915, the second orphanage in the diocese under the Sisters' care. In 1921 a second Newport estate nearby, called "Castlewood" was purchased to enlarge this institution.

Before the close of Bishop Harkins' episcopate, additional property was purchased at Saint Xavier's in 1916 and again in 1921. These purchases made possible the use of the entire block on Pine, Foster, Broad, and Claverick Streets for Saint Xavier's Convent and Academy.

Saint Francis Xavier's Alumnae Association was formed in 1906. At its first meeting, Mass was celebrated by the Most Reverend Austin Dowling. A literary program followed at which the Most Reverend Bishop presided. Officers were elected, with Miss Agnes Gormley as the first president. At subsequent

Primary Intermediate Junior High School Levels

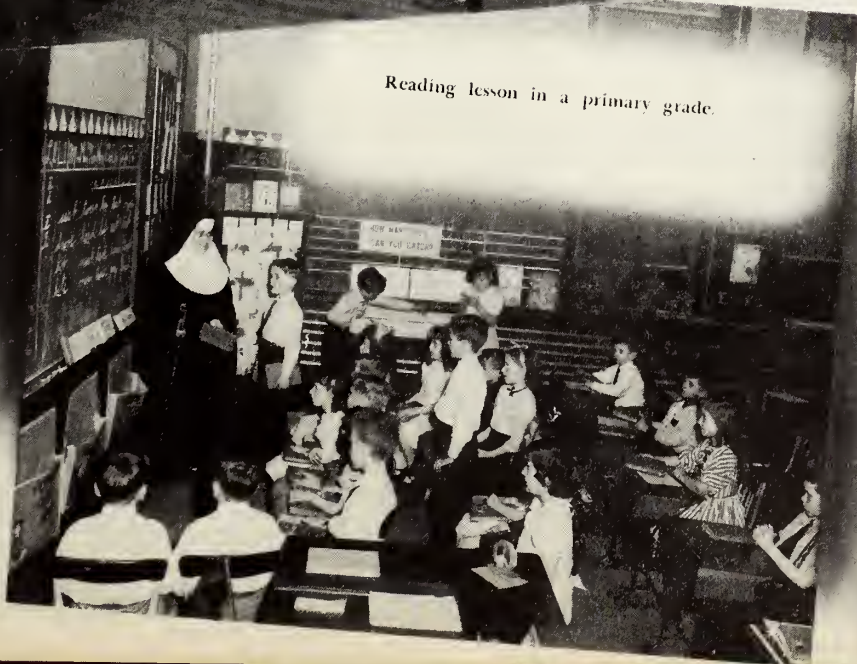
Art class in junior high school.



Medieval history project on grammar school level.



Reading lesson in a primary grade.



Extra Curricula



In junior high school, girls are introduced to cooking.



They learn to sew, too. The dress on display was made by the girl who stands near it.



Boys profit from training in industrial arts.

meetings, Constitutions and By-Laws were adopted, laying a firm foundation for a thriving association.

Gradually, through the years, the increase in enrollment among high school students of the Academy necessitated eliminating the grammar school grades. Finally, in 1919, Saint Xavier's Academy was opened to high school students only.

Fire destroyed one of the buildings at Bayview in 1906; plans for a new Saint Mary's Convent were drawn up and in 1908 the new brick structure was blessed and ready for occupancy. Planning and execution of this project was largely the responsibility of Mother Mary Joachim Walsh, who also organized the Bayview Alumnae Association in 1915.

Mother Mary Alexis Donnelly, Reverend Mother from 1910-1916, further added to the community property by the purchase of the Fiske Homestead on Diamond Hill, Cumberland, in 1913. Mother Mary Alexis had been concerned for some time about obtaining a suitable site for a vacation house for her Sisters. There is an interesting feature connected with the name "Mount Saint Rita" which she chose for this newly acquired piece of land.

Failure had attended all efforts to find suitable property, although a Mr. Patrick Carter, real estate agent, had been searching for a good location since 1910. Finally, he gave up the quest; but not Reverend Mother! She and her Community began a novena to Saint Rita, promising that if the petition were granted, she would purchase a statue of the Saint and have it placed in an oratory.

This bargain impressed some of the Sisters as being a bit audacious. The nice thing to do would be to get the statue first, they urged. But Mother Alexis was adamant.

"I will not get the statue until Saint Rita grants the request," she insisted. "A foot she will not put in this house until she gives me what I want!" A bold stand, surely, but Mother Mary Alexis had a way with her not to be gainsaid even by the Saint of the Impossible. This is what happened.

Two weeks later the Mother Bursar hurried to Reverend Mother's office complaining about the express man who had delivered at the front door a large crate from New York. Stubbornly he had refused to carry the huge box to the side entrance where such things were normally consigned. Inquiries were made. No one had ordered anything from New York. Let it wait until the evening meal. All the Sisters would be present then. Reverend Mother questioned them at table. No, no one had placed any such order. Finally, Mother commissioned two Sisters to open the crate and investigate. They returned to the refectory carrying—a large statue of Saint Rita! Amid exclamations of happy surprise, they placed it near Mother Mary Alexis' place at the table. When Mother found voice to speak she said, "Saint Rita, you did come, although I said you would not put a foot in the house until you obtained my request. Well, you are welcome and since you have come, we shall give you a place of honor."

Investigation proved that a woman in New York had promised Saint Rita that if she obtained her request in prayer, she would donate a statue of the Saint

to some convent. Saint Xavier's Convent was chosen, though hundreds of convents were convenient in New York. It would seem that Saint Rita was to have it her own way.

And she did, of course. A second novena was begun on May 14, 1913. On the fifth day of prayer, Mr. Carter called to see the Superior. He had found just the desirable spot . . . Of course it must be named Mount Saint Rita—and why not? The deeds passed into the hands of the Sisters of Mercy on Thursday, May 22, 1913, feast of Saint Rita, Saint of the Impossible. Today that same statue of Saint Rita holds a place of honor in the refectory at Mount Saint Rita; hundreds of novices have since offered daily prayers to her and have sung a special hymn to her on Sunday evenings.

In 1914, Bishop Harkins authorized building an addition to the homestead. Friends of the community contributed furniture and furnishings for the chapel. From 1913 to 1927 the Sisters continued to spend the summers at Mount Saint Rita, vacationing, studying, or making Retreats.²

A word of commendation and appreciation must be added here for the marvelous contributions made in the field of music by Mother Mary Alexis. Previous to the time she held office and after it, too, Mother composed music which has been used widely in New England. In accordance with the stipulation of the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X, she sought to meet the requirements for more devotional church music by composing many hymns. At present, these beautiful compositions are published in the *Mercy Hymnal*. Her concert pieces show mastery of technique, beauty of expression and harmonization. They include such compositions as musical scores for Longfellow's "The Day Is Done", Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light", Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break", "Immaculata Conceptio", "Monstra Te Esse Matrem", "Divine Praises", and "Quid Retribuam". Oftentimes, these concert pieces are used now at commencement exercises and other cultural programs which the Sisters sponsor and direct. Audiences are today appreciative of her religious and soul-stirring harmonies.

Called upon to meet the emergency of the epidemic after World War I, in 1918, the Sisters of Mercy gave unremitting service in the Emergency Hospital of Woonsocket, in Saint Joseph's Hospital, and the Rhode Island Hospital in Providence. They did district nursing in areas of Providence and Pawtucket where their services were urgently needed. Eighteen Sisters were themselves stricken with the dread disease while ministering to others but all recovered, thank God! Letters from Dr. John M. Peters, then superintendent of the Rhode Island Hospital, from Miss Winifred L. Fitzpatrick of the Providence District Nursing Association, from Anna S. Jacobson, Assistant Superintendent of Nurses at Rhode Island Hospital, expressed their gratitude and appreciation for services rendered by the Sisters.

Bishop Harkins' health had been declining, his task had been too strenuous for his failing strength and in 1919, Reverend William A. Hickey was consecrated co-adjutor Bishop with the right of succession. The diocese was saddened

²*Mount Saint Rita Quarterly*, I: 8-9.

at the death of Most Reverend Matthew Harkins on May 25, 1921. His work was taken up and carried on by his loyal co-adjutor, the Most Reverend William Augustine Hickey.

From his consecration on April 10, 1919, as co-adjutor Bishop and throughout his administration as Bishop from 1921 to 1933, the Most Reverend William A. Hickey showed himself above all an enthusiastic proponent for Catholic education and an ardent, zealous organizer in behalf of diocesan Catholic charities. Under his jurisdiction, the Providence Community of the Sisters of Mercy continued to thrive.

Important community developments evolved in the brief space from 1921 to 1929. At Saint Mary's Seminary, Bayview, the Sisters celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their academy in 1924. The alumnae compiled, for the occasion, a booklet called *Bayview Reminiscences* and also donated, in honor of Mother Mary Joachim, a statue of Our Lady of Grace. Bishop Hickey honored the observance by equipping a chemistry laboratory and physics classroom.

The Novitiate was moved, in 1927, from the Motherhouse, Saint Xavier's, Providence, to Mount Saint Rita, Cumberland. The former Novitiate grounds at Saint Xavier's were cleared, the old building on Pine Street demolished to make way for the new Academy building. Ground was broken for this in 1927, and in 1929, Academy Hall, the beautiful new structure, was formally opened.

Outstanding among community events in 1925 was the Holy Year Pilgrimage made by Reverend Mother Mary Matthew Doyle and her companion, Sister Mary de Lourdes McCarthy. Mother treasures the recollection of her audience with Pope Pius XI. He sent his blessings to the Rhode Island Community and presented Mother with a precious gift, an autographed picture engraved on choice parchment.

In a three-day celebration beginning on March 12, 1926, the Sisters observed the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Order in the diocese. In this year, too, Sisters attended the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago.

During the next few years a change took place in the status of the Community. Though it was in 1929 that various communities of the Sisters of Mercy throughout the United States took definite steps toward amalgamation, the idea of union was not new to them. As early as 1870, Michael O'Connor, S.J., formerly Bishop of Pittsburgh, had expressed the wish that superiors of convents of Mercy co-operate in a united effort to effect uniformity of custom. He recognized that unusual conditions resulting from pioneer efforts, lack of communication between distant houses of the Institute, insufficient numbers to execute a given work would eventuate in lack of uniformity among the Sisters of Mercy.³

In 1905, the next suggestion of union came from the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Diomedo Falconio, representing the desire of the Sacred Congregation

³Wammes, Sister Mary Charlotte, R.S.M., *The Sisters of Mercy in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 1858-1944*, p. 83.



Mother General...

Mother Mary Bernadine Purcell, R.S.M.



Mother Vicar General...

Mother Mary Carmelita Hartman, R.S.M.

The General Council ...
Seated, left to right: Sister Mary Mech-
tilde Doyle, R.S.M., Councilor General;
Mother Mary Bernadine Purcell, R.S.M.,
Mother General; Mother Mary Carmelita
Hartman, R.S.M., Mother Vicar General;
Sister Mary Seraphia Lannon, R.S.M.,
Councilor General.
Standing: Sister Mary Isabel Early, R.S.M.,
Councilor General; Sister Mary Maurice
Tobin, R.S.M., Secretary General; Sister
Mary Ligouri Curry, R.S.M., Procurator
General.



**The General Motherhouse
Bethesda, Maryland**



Mother Assistant Provincial...
Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, R.S.M.



Mother Provincial...
Mother Mary Hilda Miley, R.S.M.



The Provincial Council . . .
Seated, left to right: Mother Mary Hilda Miley, R.S.M., Mother Provincial; Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, R.S.M., Mother Assistant Provincial; Sister Mary Loretto Cobb, R.S.M., Councilor Provincial.
Standing: Sister Mary Albeus Ormond, R.S.M., Secretary Provincial; Sister Mary Admirabilis Donovan, R.S.M., Procurator Provincial; Sister Mary Teresita Corrigan, R.S.M., Councilor Provincial; Sister Mary Catherine Collins, R.S.M., Councilor Provincial.



The Provincial House
Manville, Rhode Island

of the Propaganda that some means be set forth to better the existing conditions of the Sisters of Mercy in this country. In a letter addressed to the bishops and archbishops of the United States, he stressed the need, value, possibility, and plan for union. Since the Constitutions, from the beginning, had been approved by the Holy See, the Institute could not be considered diocesan, but pontifical. The Archbishop pointed out that its Constitutions should be subject to the most recent prescriptions of Canon Law; that full time should be given in the postulancy and in the novitiate, and that sufficient preparatory training should be given teachers and nurses. He proposed to establish one text of the Constitutions, thus unifying the observance of all, introduced the change that no Sister be permitted to take final vows at the end of the novitiate, but should remain for some time in temporary vows only. Provinces were to be formed, each having its own novitiate.

No important step was taken toward general government until 1923 when Mother Mary Sophia Mitchell, superior of Saint Francis Xavier Convent of Mercy in Chicago, invited superiors from several convents of Mercy in the United States to meet in Chicago to discuss a uniform revision of the Rule and Constitutions. This assembly addressed a letter to several communities of Sisters of Mercy asking for a definite statement relative to the proposed revision. Thought and discussion followed.

In October of 1927, superiors of the Baltimore, Chicago, and Milwaukee convents while travelling West, stopped at the Cincinnati Motherhouse.

During the visit, the question that had occasioned the Chicago meeting in 1923—uniformity of rule and custom—was again discussed. As a result, Mother Mary Carmelita Hartman, superior of the Baltimore community, was asked by those present at this informal and unplanned meeting to prepare a letter on the subject of amalgamation and send the communication to all convents of Mercy in the United States.⁴

With the approval of Archbishop Curley of Baltimore and of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Fumasoni-Biondi, Mother Mary Carmelita Hartman, Mother Superior of Baltimore, initiated the movement toward general government. She proposed again the idea of amalgamating several communities, referring to Archbishop Falconio's letter, stressing the Holy Father's wish, and adding the expressed approval of the Apostolic Delegate, the Most Reverend P. Fumasoni-Biondi. She asked that a vote be taken upon the question and a report sent to her. She assured superiors that amalgamation would not bring a transfer of members from one province to another, nor would it affect the financial or juridical status of any community. The Institute would remain pontifical in case of amalgamation.

Thirty-one communities favored the union and sent delegates in June, 1928, to a meeting at Mount Saint Agnes, Mount Washington, Baltimore, Maryland. A letter of petition for amalgamation was sent to His Holiness, Pius XI.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 85.

In 1929, His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate, received from the Secretariate of Religious a letter and the decree of union. Both documents and a letter from the Apostolic Delegate were sent to the archbishops and bishops of the United States and to each of the sixty-one Motherhouses of the Sisters of Mercy. Excerpts of Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi's letter show how earnest he was in his approval:

The Holy See desires that this union embrace not only those Communities which have already decided to amalgamate, but also those other Communities which have not yet come to a decision on this matter. . . . It is the conviction of those who observed the life and deeds of the Sisters of Mercy that a union under a General Superioress will preserve and strengthen religious discipline and enable your Institute the more ably and successfully to carry on the noble works to which it is devoted. Therefore, I most earnestly entreat you to harken to the voice of our Holy Father as expressed in the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Religious and to lend a willing ear to the wishes of the Holy See which merits from every Religious the response of loving obedience.⁵

Representatives of thirty-nine communities convened on August 24, 1929, at the first meeting or General Chapter, His Excellency, the Apostolic Delegate presiding. Among the number were representatives from the community of Providence, Rhode Island. This group of religious women, in filial devotion, had acceded to the Holy Father's wish.

Here they listened to the Apostolic Delegate explain the business of the chapter and the purpose of general government. In part he explained:

The main purpose of this union is to strengthen the present houses, to increase the number of vocations, to promote the spiritual life and to advance the special works of the Institute. Beyond a doubt this amalgamation will increase in your Congregation the power for good both within and without. The enlarged novitiate will enable you to build a more solid foundation in the hearts of those that come to join your ranks. Under the supervision of local, provincial, and general superioresses the religious fervor of your Congregation will not only be maintained but also increased by renewing it if it would threaten to lag and by spurring it on to greater perfection where it flourishes.

This union will also offer your Institute increased opportunities to prepare in a much better manner the younger members to carry on their special work. Today greater demands are being made both on teachers and nurses, so that even large convents find it difficult to meet all the requirements. Here the union will make it possible to provide that training of each Sister which her special avocation demands. Then, too, the stronger convents will assist those struggling against greater difficulties until they obtain a firm foothold. In this manner the amalgamation will serve both the spiritual and temporal needs of your Congregation.⁶

⁵Costello, Sister Mary Loretto, *The Sisters of Mercy of Maryland*, p. 213.

⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

Mother Mary Carmelita Hartman was elected Mother General. The new congregation was divided into six provinces comprising in its membership over five thousand Sisters of Mercy. The General Motherhouse was located at first at Mercy Villa, just outside Baltimore. In 1931 it was transferred to Bethesda, Maryland, now in the Archdiocese of Washington.

Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, then Reverend Mother in Providence, was elected first Mother Provincial of the Province of Providence. This province first included the communities of Providence, Fall River, New York, and Gabriels. Later the territory was deemed too expansive for one Province so it was divided, making Providence and Fall River one Province and New York and Gabriels the other. For the first few years, the Provincial House remained at Saint Xavier's Convent, Broad Street, Providence, where formerly the Motherhouse had been. It was moved to Mount Saint Rita in 1932 when a commodious bungalow on the Bowen Estate was purchased, remodelled, and formally blessed as the present Provincial House.

Union has indeed added strength to the present Province of Providence. It now includes the diocese of Providence, Fall River, and the foreign mission of Belize, British Honduras, added in 1932. Its central novitiate has flourished beyond all expectations, and the works of the Institute have notably increased. From 1929 until the present time, the educational facilities for the Sisters have become more extensive. Progress in the schools has been notably intensified and rapid. Salve Regina College, a new academy at Mount Saint Mary's, Fall River, Mercymount Country Day School in Cumberland have been opened, eight new parochial schools, twenty-five Sunday Schools and twenty-three vacation schools have been staffed.

When the novitiates of the province were combined in 1930 in the central Mother of Mercy Novitiate at Mount Saint Rita Convent, Sister Mary Berenice Devine was appointed Mistress of Novices with Sister Mary Rosarii Carroll as her assistant. Since then a novitiate training school called Mercy College of Education has been provided for the teachers' pre-service training. Affiliation of this normal training school with the Catholic University of America was effected in 1945. After the novices make their temporary vows, they observe and do practice teaching either in diocesan parochial schools or at Mercymount Country Day School, the community's laboratory school since 1948.

Singularly blessed with an increase of subjects, the early novitiate's accommodations rapidly became inadequate. A new building became a necessity. Through the generosity of a benefactor, Mr. Michael Meehan, who contributed \$10,000 towards the prospective building, Mother Provincial was enabled to begin work on the "new wing" as it was called. Ground was broken for the new building on November 22, 1933. Completed on May 1, 1934, the first Mass was celebrated in its chapel on May 8 of the same year. Postulants continued arriving in ever increasing numbers, which happily necessitated providing more room. Plans for an addition were made in 1939. In 1940 work began on the present beautiful Mother of Mercy Novitiate and Mount Saint Rita

Convent. It was dedicated on May 22, 1941, feast of Saint Rita, by the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough, then Bishop of Providence. The Sisters were greatly indebted to Mr. James G. Lacey, brother of Sister Mary Berchmans, whose legacy of \$65,000 was used in furthering this most necessary project.

Friends of the community assisted in beautifying the spacious terrain surrounding the novitiate building. Statues of Saint Joseph and of Our Lady of Grace, a shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, outdoor Stations of the Cross were donated by generous benefactors. In 1946, the now famous shrine of Our Lady of Fatima was erected in a grotto near the main road. Since then, people from everywhere, it seems, come to pray at that shrine, kneeling on the stone steps or on the ground, saying the Rosary to Her Who asked that the Rosary be prayed often and fervently. The grotto is floodlighted at night, conspicuous to all who pass by or who stop for a word of greeting to Our Lady. Since 1947 the Sisters have sponsored an annual pilgrimage to the shrine, in October, in commemoration of Our Lady's marvelous apparitions to the children of Fatima and their portentous message.

Additional property adjoining Mount Saint Rita was purchased in 1948. Swift's farm and the Aldrich Estate have added over two hundred acres of land to its original extent. Mercymount Country Day School, remodelled on the Aldrich Estate, opened on September 13 of that same year with an initial registration of 80 pupils, which has now increased to 220.

During the early period of development at Mount Saint Rita, a new project was undertaken, that of publishing a magazine dedicated to the purpose of fostering religious vocations. It was called the *Mount Saint Rita Quarterly* and made its first appearance with the Easter issue of 1932. Contributions were offered by both professed Sisters and novices. It has since proved a valuable source of written and pictorial history of the Mount and has done much to accomplish the aim for which it was intended.

The years have proved, too, that the second purpose of the amalgamation—the "advancement of the special works of the Institute"—has been effected notably in this province. The special work of the Sisters in this area is the education of youth. Broadening the scope of facilities for further professional training has eventuated in excellent student achievement.

Normal training is begun during the period of the novitiate and continued at Catholic Teachers College, established in 1929, for in-service training. Here Sisters study until they have completed the requirements for obtaining State and diocesan certification, either provisional or professional. At the first graduation from Catholic Teachers College in 1933, seventy-seven Sisters obtained their educational degrees. The number has been steadily augmented until the present day.

Since many Sisters must be prepared for teaching on the high school and college level, lengthy and rigid professional courses and assiduous research became a necessity. As soon as school closes for the year, Sisters prepare for their six weeks' summer sessions. They have matriculated at Salve Regina College; Boston



Notre Dame University,
Indiana.



Nazareth College, Ro-
chester, New York.



College of Saint Rose,
Albany, New York.

Teacher Training Program

Boston College, Bos-
ton, Massachusetts.



Salve Regina College, Newport,
Rhode Island.





Catholic Teachers' College, Providence, Rhode Island.



Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island.



Rhode Island College of Education, Providence, Rhode Island.



College of Saint Francis, Joliet, Illinois.

Star-of-the-Sea Villa...1923-1951

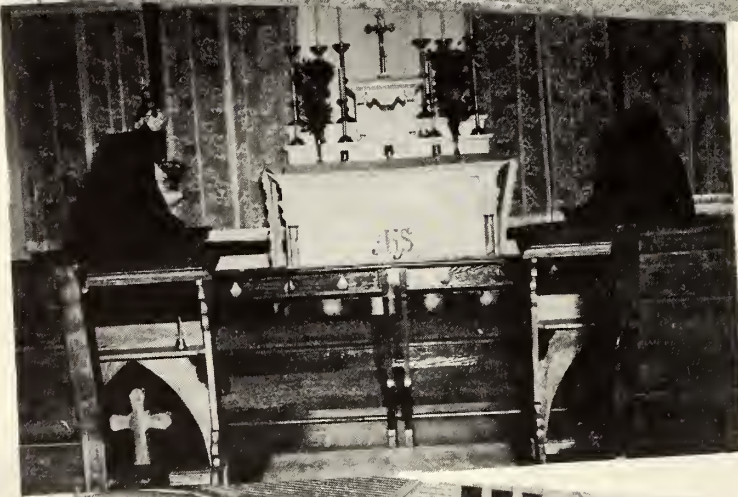


STAR-OF-THE-SEA VILLA (1923-1951)

Star-of-the-Sea Villa, a seventy-seven acre summer vacation spot for 'the Sisters of the Providence Province since 1923, was purchased by the Sisters of Mercy of Fall River and is located off Russells Mills Road in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Here every summer approximately six hundred Sisters enjoy a period of relaxation near the shore of the Apponegansett River. Groups of sixty are accommodated over a period of ten weeks.

Situated in a secluded area, the Villa is a large rambling building of twenty-five rooms. Formerly the property of Captain William T. Schultz, it evinces his love for the nautical in architecture and interior decoration. Ceilings are low and wood-panelled, fire places tiled, windows simulating portholes separate the rooms, and one bedroom is constructed like a ship's cabin with built-in bunks along the walls.

Though the Villa is deserted during the winter months, it is alive with gaiety and cheerfulness during the summer. Here the Sisters enjoy swimming, tennis, croquet, outdoor roasts, long walks, picnic lunches, rowing, informal games, or quiet reading and sewing. Most Reverend Bishop Cassidy has provided for daily Mass celebrated by priests from the Holy Cross Seminary in North Dartmouth.



College; Providence College; Fordham University; Catholic University; College of Saint Catherine, Minnesota; Notre Dame University, Indiana; Saint Xavier's College, Chicago; Saint Rose's College, Albany; Saint Joseph's College, Hartford; Notre Dame of Maryland; Saint Elizabeth's, New Jersey; College Misericordia, Dallas; Mercy College, Pittsburgh; Saint Francis College, Joliet, Illinois; Manhattanville College, New York, and at the Sorbonne, Paris, France.

Many benefits accrue from this continuance of professional training in graduate schools. Not least among them is the opportunity of broadening one's intellectual horizon. Here there is profitable circulation and communication of thought by means of personal intercourse with specialists in the teaching profession from all over the country. Since the war and because of present day means of travel, it is not unusual to meet eminent scholars from hitherto distant countries. Discussions concerning hopes, conflicts, successes, common problems, the informality of the seminar room, the inspiration derived from men and women to whom intellectual delight and attainment are of paramount import, these impart a real and substantial character to the dignity of the profession.

Salve Regina College, opened on September 21, 1947, had long been a project earnestly desired and worked for. Its charter had been granted in February of 1934, after the bill to establish a Catholic Women's College had been introduced into the State legislature by the Honorable Edmund Flynn. Sisters were trained for its prospective faculty for many years in advance of its opening, and the nucleus of a college library was begun, steadily increasing as time elapsed.

It was not until 1947, however, that hopes and plans reached fulfillment. At that time, Mr. Robert Goelet offered his beautiful estate at Ochre Court, Newport, to the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough to be used for educational purposes. He conferred with Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, then the Mother Provincial, as to the advisability of using this territory for the proposed college. Mother Mary Matthew accepted the offer with deepest gratitude. The estate was given into the hands of the Sisters of Mercy and remodelled as the present Salve Regina College. Later, in February of 1948, Mr. Goelet made a second gift of real estate and a building on a tract of land about one block from the college. It was remodelled and called Mercy Hall and serves as an auditorium-gymnasium, dormitory, laboratories, and classrooms.

At the request of Most Reverend James E. Cassidy, Bishop of the Fall River diocese, plans were inaugurated in 1945 for the establishment of a girls' high school at Mount Saint Mary's. On September 3, 1946, this academy was formally opened, bringing to successful achievement its first graduating class in June of 1950.

Of the third great purpose of amalgamating the Sisters of Mercy in this country—namely, thereby to increase their religious fervor—who can write? As we stand on the threshold of the century and the arc of time has almost reached full circle, who shall record the vast amount of spiritual treasure amassed from the venerable Mother Mary Xavier Warde, down to the youngest postulant in 1951?

Exteriorly, the works of the Institute have prospered and increased. By reason of patient hard work, the Sisters have been able to reach hundreds of thousands of souls through their splendid institutions. There is much labor and trial still ahead, if these colleges, academies, and schools are to go on thriving.

But what of the spiritual wealth of the community, its real and only claim to greatness? For one hundred years, the ordinary Sister of Mercy, shielded from worldliness by her vows, her rule, her very anonymity, has gone about her daily round of prayer, duty, and recreation. What glory has she given to God by her unselfish charity, her exercise of mercy, her humility, detachment, poverty of spirit? These things no one can answer. They will be told when the last war has been waged, when all men shall be arraigned before the Judge of the living and the dead. Then, men shall magnify the Lord for the great things He has accomplished through the infirmity of human nature. The work of the Institute of Mercy and the sanctification of its members will be revealed in its true glory—as the glorious work of a merciful God.

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Chronology

- 1851—Five Sisters of Mercy led by Mother Francis Xavier Warde, R.S.M., arrived in Providence from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on March 11. A convent was opened on March 12 in a small cottage on High Street, now Weybosset. This date is known as the Foundation Day of the Sisters of Mercy in New England. Bishop O'Reilly purchased on May 28 the Stead Estate at the corner of Broad and Claverick Streets for a new convent. The first ceremony for reception of the habit was held in the Cathedral in August. St. Francis Xavier's Academy was opened in September. The Sisters staffed a parochial school for girls in St. Patrick's parish, Providence, travelling every day from St. Xavier's. Sisters moved into the new convent on Broad and Claverick Streets in October. The building in the adjoining lot was used as an Orphan's Home.
- 1852—Sisters were sent in May from Providence to open St. Patrick's Convent, Hartford, Connecticut. This name was later changed to St. Catherine's. St. Mary's Convent was established in New Haven, Connecticut, by Sisters from Providence.
- 1853—Orphan asylums, opened in New Haven and Hartford, relieved the crowded conditions in the one at St. Xavier's Providence.
- 1854—St. Joseph's School, Providence, was staffed with Sisters from St. Xavier's in January. Mrs. Goodloe Harper and Miss Emily Harper, daughter and granddaughter of Charles Carroll, had furnished land for St. Mary's Newport, which was opened in May.
- 1855—Work on a brick building on Claverick Street was commenced. In March, a mob of Know-Nothings surrounded St. Xavier's convent, threatening death and destruction. Bishop O'Reilly, aided by a company of Catholic men, protected the Sisters. The mob dispersed, leaving the Sisters unmolested.
- 1856—The Right Reverend Bernard O'Reilly met death on his return voyage from Europe.
- 1857—Mother Xavier Warde, R.S.M., loaned two Sisters to the community at Little Rock, Arkansas. A foundation was made from St. Xavier's to Rochester, New York.
- 1858—Bishop Francis Patrick McFarland was consecrated Bishop of the Hartford Diocese. He lived in Providence for the first fourteen years of his episcopacy. Mother Xavier Warde, R.S.M., and six Sisters left St. Xavier's to make a foundation in Manchester, New Hampshire.
- 1859—Four Sisters were sent to St. Augustine, Florida, for a foundation there.
- 1861—Sisters from St. Xavier's commuted each day to St. Mary's, Pawtucket, to teach in the parochial school and Sunday school there.
- 1862—St. Mary's Convent, Pawtucket, was opened. Bishop McFarland transferred the Orphan's Home from St. Xavier's to the new St. Aloysius Home on Prairie Avenue. Although the Sisters had taken care of little girls only, boys were now admitted. Sisters travelled from St. Xavier's to the Immaculate Conception parochial school and Sunday school.
- 1863—Immaculate Conception Convent, Providence, was established as a separate parish unit.
- 1864—St. James' Home for boys in Hartford, Connecticut, was opened by the Sisters.
- 1865—An addition was made to the original Academy building on Claverick Street. This entire structure is now known as Mercy Hall. Sisters in St. Augustine, Florida, nearly destitute during the Civil War, were forced to combine with the convent in Columbus, Georgia; three Sisters only remained at St. Augustine.
- 1866—Five Sisters from St. Xavier's made a foundation in Nashville, Tennessee.

- 1867—An academy was begun at St. Mary's, Newport.
St. Peter's School was established in Hartford, Connecticut.
- 1868—The Sisters opened an academy in St. Mary's parish, Pawtucket.
Reinforcements were sent from Manchester to St. Augustine, Florida.
- 1869—The Sisters opened St. Patrick's School in New Haven, Connecticut.
Sisters took up residence in St. Bernard's Convent, Woonsocket, in August, opening an academy in September. In this year, too, St. Charles School was transferred to the charge of the Sisters. Built in 1859, it had functioned previously under a lay faculty.
- 1870—A convent was opened at St. Patrick's, Providence.
- 1871—The Sunday School at St. Michael's, Providence, was supplied with Sisters from St. Xavier's.
- 1872—At St. John's parish, Providence, the Sisters began Sunday school and sodality work.
The Hartford diocese was divided into two sees: Hartford, Connecticut, and Providence, Rhode Island. Right Reverend Thomas Hendricks was consecrated first Bishop of Providence and Mother Mary Bernard Read, R.S.M., was appointed Superioress of the Rhode Island Community. Mother Mary Pauline Maher, R.S.M., and the other three officials of the Community went to Hartford.
- 1873—Work at St. Joseph's Hospital, New Bedford, Massachusetts, was inaugurated by the Sisters. In St. Lawrence's parish, New Bedford, Massachusetts, they began parish work and Sunday school.
Mother Bernard Read, R.S.M., and her Mistress of Novices sailed to Ireland for subjects.
- 1874—St. Catherine's, Fall River, supplied with eight Sisters from St. Xavier's, commenced a girls' academy and convent.
St. Mary's School was opened in Fall River. Land was purchased and building erected for St. Mary's boarding school at Bayview, Rhode Island.
St. Xavier's was established as a day school; boarders were transferred to Bayview.
- 1875—A second large building, gift of the diocesan clergy, led by Reverend Michael McCabe, Vicar General, was erected at Bayview.
- 1876—Sunday schools were instituted at Sacred Heart Church, Central Falls, Rhode Island, and in Sacred Heart Church, New Bedford, Massachusetts.
- 1877—Girls' Sunday schools were commenced at Sacred Heart Church, Fall River, Massachusetts; St. Joseph's Church, Bowenville, Fall River; and at St. Joseph's parish, Pawtucket, Rhode Island.
- 1878—A convent and school were opened at St. Patrick's parish, Valley Falls.
The cornerstone of the new Cathedral was laid on Thanksgiving Day.
- 1879—St. Joseph's School, a brick building erected on John Street, passed into the hands of the Jesuits who secured Sisters from St. Xavier's to staff it.
Sisters began teaching at St. Michael's School, Woonsocket, then attached to St. Charles' parish and located on River Street. Work in Sunday school at St. Anne's, Fall River, was begun.
Sisters moved into the new convent at St. Bernard's, Woonsocket.
- 1880—Sunday school was opened at Sacred Heart parish, East Providence.
- 1881—Sisters began their teaching career at St. Edward's School, Providence.
- 1882—The cornerstone of St. Joseph's School, New Bedford, Massachusetts, was laid. This is now known as Holy Name School.
- 1883—Elementary grades commenced at St. Joseph's, New Bedford; then a secondary level was added. Teachers were supplied from St. Xavier's and lived in the wing of St. Joseph's Hospital, New Bedford.
Sisters began teaching school at Holy Name, New Bedford.
- 1884—Religious instruction in the girls' Sunday school of the Holy Name Church, Providence, was inaugurated by the Sisters of St. Xavier's convent.
- 1885—Sisters began work at St. Vincent's Home, Fall River; at St. Mary's School, New Bedford; and at Sunday schools in St. Joseph's parish, Newport; in St. Patrick's, Fall River; and in St. Louis', Fall River.

- 1886—Sisters from St. Catherine's, Fall River, travelled daily to St. Patrick's, Fall River, for teaching.
A Sunday school was opened at St. Mary's parish, Warren.
Right Reverend Thomas Hendricken died.
- 1887—St. Patrick's parish, Fall River, opened its own convent as did St. Joseph's parish, Pawtucket, Rhode Island.
Right Reverend Matthew Harkins was consecrated April 14, 1887.
- 1888—Sisters began Sunday school work at Assumption parish, Elmwood.
Additions were made to St. Aloysius Home; a chapel was built.
James Cardinal Gibbons visited St. Xavier's convent.
- 1889—The Cathedral was consecrated on June 30. Archbishop Ireland preached at the Pontifical Mass.
- 1890—Tyler School was opened, merging Lime Street Grammar School and South Street Primary. The building had been begun by Bishop Hendricken.
- 1892—St. Edward's Convent, Providence, was opened for the Sisters.
- 1894—The old stone building on Claverick and Broad Streets was demolished. The cornerstone for the new building was laid on September 23 by the Right Reverend Matthew Harkins.
- 1897—The new St. Francis Xavier Convent and chapel was blessed and the main altar consecrated. The chapel was given by Mr. Joseph Banigan. Construction work was planned and supervised by Reverend John Harty and Mr. George J. West.
- 1899—The organ at St. Xavier's was installed, a gift of Reverend Philip Grace, D.D., former pastor of St. Mary's, Newport.
The brick building and school on Claverick Street, now Mercy Hall, was remodelled for school only. Bishop Harkins equipped the chemical laboratory and the physics classroom.
St. Francis de Sales Reading Circle, later known as the Catholic Woman's Club, was founded by Sister Margaret Mary Donworth, R.S.M.
- Reverend John Harty donated the painting of "Deposition" after Botticelli to St. Xavier's Convent.
- 1901—The Golden Jubilee of the Order in Providence was observed March 12. Sister Margaret Mary Donworth, R.S.M., compiled a booklet, "Jubilee Souvenirs". Reverend Mother Germaine Toomey asked two favors; exposition every First Friday and a privileged altar. Both were granted.
A House of Mercy was opened at St. Joseph's, Pawtucket.
Sisters took up their abode in Our Lady of Mercy Convent, St. James' parish, South New Bedford, Massachusetts.
- 1902—Sisters began religious instruction in Sunday school at St. Ann's parish, Branch Avenue, Providence.
Estates fronting Foster Street and Claverick Street were purchased.
- 1903—Rome granted permission for a privileged altar at St. Xavier's Convent.
- 1904—The Providence diocese was again divided. Fall River was erected as a separate see, with Right Reverend William Stang as first Bishop.
- 1905—The Community of Mercy in Rhode Island remained intact with its Motherhouse in Providence.
In Fall River, St. Catherine's Convent was made the Motherhouse with Mother Mary Mechtilde the superior of the new Community.
Sisters took possession of the Immaculate Conception Convent, Walling Street, Providence.
Reverend John Harty died. The Sisters lost one of their greatest benefactors.
- 1906—A fire at Bayview in April destroyed a portion of the original building. Plans were made for a brick structure.
The cornerstone of a new St. Mary's Seminary Convent was laid on the Feast of the Presentation, November 21.
- 1907—Right Reverend William Stang died.
Mt. St. Mary's, Fall River, Massachusetts, was purchased and made the Motherhouse.

1908—The newly completed building at St. Mary's Seminary, Bayview, was blessed. Monsignor Farrelly was an outstanding benefactor in supervising the erection of the building.

The Bishop formed an organization known as the Rhode Island Catholic Deaf Mute Society. The Sisters, previously qualified for the work because of instructing Catholic children coming from the Rhode Island Institute for the Deaf, now gave Catechetical Instruction once a week to the new organization.

1910—The building at Bayview which was not destroyed by fire was remodelled and moved to the rear. It was used as a Novitiate called "Nazareth". At this time there was instituted, with the sanction of the Right Reverend Bishop Harkins, a Canonical Novitiate. Sisters began work at St. Kilian's School, New Bedford.

1911—The new St. Edward's Convent, Providence, was opened.

1912—The Sisters organized a school in St. Augustine's, Newport, where a convent was prepared for them.

The diocese celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the consecration of the Right Reverend Matthew Harkins.

In the newly opened convent in St. Mary's, Bristol, Sisters began Sunday school and visitation of the sick.

1913—The Fiske homestead on Diamond Hill was purchased by Mother Mary Alexis Donnelly, R.S.M. It was called Mt. St. Rita and first used as a summer vacation spot for the Sisters.

1914—A Sunday school was opened at Jamestown in St. Mark's parish, with two Sisters from St. Mary's, Newport, in charge.

St. Francis Xavier Alumnae Association was affiliated with the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae.

1915—A large acreage of land was purchased for use of Bayview Seminary.

A convent was opened at Holy Name parish, New Bedford.

St. Mary's School, Bristol, Mercy Home and School, Newport, and St. Brendan's Sunday school were opened.

1916—Additional property on Pine Street was purchased for St. Xavier's Convent grounds.

St. Ann's Convent, Providence, was opened. Sunday schools were organized in St. Leo's, Pawtucket, Our Lady of Grace, Johnston, and at St. William's, Fall River, Massachusetts.

1917—A convent of Mercy was established at St. Joseph's, Ashton, at Sacred Heart parish, East Providence, and a parochial school was opened at St. Ann's, Providence.

Sisters took courses in First Aid and received certificates during World War I.

1918—During the influenza epidemic, Sisters assisted in emergency hospitals in Woonsocket, in St. Joseph's, Providence, and in the Rhode Island Hospital, Providence. Though eighteen Sisters were stricken, all recovered. The Rosary was recited three times daily while the epidemic lasted.

1919—Bishop-elect William A. Hickey was consecrated Co-adjutor Bishop, with the right of succession.

St. Xavier's Academy was now open to high school students only. Increased enrollment during the years had necessitated the gradual elimination of primary and grammar grades. St. Xavier's student body entertained Cardinal Mercier.

College classes for the Sisters were formed at St. Xavier's with the Dominican Fathers as teachers.

Our Lady of Grace statue was unveiled on St. Xavier's campus. This was a gift of the Alumnae Association in memory of Sister Margaret Mary Donworth, R.S.M., on St. Xavier's staff for thirty years.

1920—The first Diocesan Institute for Teachers was held in Cathedral Hall. The week's lectures were given by Father Donnelly, S.J.

Sister Mary Bartholomew Clark, R.S.M., was appointed as Community Supervisor for Grade Schools by Reverend Mother Mary Matthew with the Bishop's approval.

1921—Final property was purchased which gave the Sisters the complete block at Foster, Pine, Broad and Claverick Streets.

A class in Braille was formed by the St. Francis Xavier Alumnae Association. Four Sisters from St. Xavier's studied Braille and transcribed books for the blind. Members of Elmhurst and Bayview Alumnae were also admitted to the class.

Right Reverend Matthew Harkins died.

- 1922—Sacred Heart School, East Providence was opened.
- 1923—A convent was opened in St. Joseph's parish, Providence, and at St. Matthew's parish, Auburn.
- 1924—The convent was opened and the Sisters began school work at St. Edward's, Pawtucket. St. Kilian's Convent, New Bedford, and St. Mary's Convent, North Attleboro, were opened.
- St. Mary's Seminary, Bayview, observed the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. Bishop Hickey equipped physics and chemical laboratories. A souvenir volume of reminiscences from 1874 to 1924 was arranged by the alumnae. A statue of Our Lady of Grace given in honor of Mother Mary Joachim was unveiled on the grounds.
- 1925—St. Xavier's Sisters staffed the new St. Michael's School.
- The Apostolic Delegate, the Most Reverend Fumasoni-Biondi visited St. Xavier's.
- Reverend Mother Mary Matthew, R.S.M., and Sister Mary de Lourdes, R.S.M., made the Holy Year Pilgrimage to Rome. Pope Pius XI presented Mother with a gift, a parchment bearing his picture.
- 1926—The Immaculate Conception convent and school in Westerly were opened.
- A three-day celebration marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy in the diocese was begun on March 12.
- Sunday schools were instituted at St. Sebastian's, Providence, and St. Benedict's, Conimicut.
- 1927—The Novitiate was transferred to Mt. St. Rita from St. Xavier's, Providence.
- Ground was broken for the new building at St. Xavier's Academy.
- Sunday school and catechetical work began at St. Bernard's parish, Assonet, Massachusetts.
- 1929—Many communities of the Sisters of Mercy amalgamated under a superior general. Mother Mary Matthew, R.S.M., was elected the first Provincial of the Providence Province.
- 1930—The Novitiates of the Fall River and Providence dioceses were combined in the central novitiate of the province at Mt. St. Rita.
- Sister Mary Berenice Devine, R.S.M., was appointed Mistress of Novices with Sister Mary Rosarii Carroll, R.S.M., as her assistant.
- 1931—The Sisters of Mercy celebrated the centenary of the Order throughout the world. A triduum was made by the Sisters. St. Xavier's Academy student body presented a pageant. Pope Pius XI sent a message of congratulation, signed by Cardinal Pacelli.
- A hurricane in Belize destroyed all the buildings of the Sisters except part of the main building.
- 1932—The Belize community in British Honduras was added to the Providence Province, as its foreign mission.
- The new Provincial House at Manville, Rhode Island, was opened on September 24.
- Mother Mary Matthew, R.S.M., Mother Provincial, and Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., went to Belize on their first visitation.
- The convent at Valley Falls was destroyed by fire on December 16. While plans were being formed for the building, Sisters commuted daily to St. Xavier's.
- The first edition of the *Mt. St. Rita Quarterly* made its appearance at Eastertime.
- 1933—The first group of missionary volunteers from the Province went to Belize, British Honduras.
- Sisters began Sunday school work at St. Mary's parish, Hebronsville, Massachusetts.
- Right Reverend William H. Hickey died on October 4.
- Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi was made Cardinal Protector of the Sisters of Mercy of the Union of the United States of America.
- Two Sisters went to the Sorbonne, Paris, France, for work towards a degree in French.
- 1934—A Charter was granted for Salve Regina College in February. The bill to open a Catholic Women's College was introduced by Representative Edmund Flynn.
- The new wing at Mt. St. Rita was completed on May 1. The first Mass was celebrated in the chapel on May 8.
- Sisters opened a Sunday school at St. Margaret's parish, Stonington, Connecticut.
- 1935—The cornerstone for the new St. Catherine's convent in Belize was laid on January 27.

- 1936—Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., became the second Provincial of the Province of Providence.
- 1937—The first edition of the vocation pamphlet, *Come and See*, was published.
- 1938—The Sisters entered the new convent in Sacred Heart parish, East Providence.
Sisters began work at Sunday school and instruction classes in St. William's, Norwood, Rhode Island.
- 1939—The shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help at the Novitiate was dedicated. It was donated by Miss Alice Mullen.
The ground was broken on October 25 for the new Rhode Island Catholic Orphan Asylum at Greenville.
Pope Pius XI died on February 10 in the seventeenth year of his pontificate.
Pope Pius XII was elected on March 5.
- 1940—St. Leo's Convent, Pawtucket, was opened in September. School was held in the basement of the church.
Catechetical work was begun at St. Mary's parish, Carolina, and Sunday Schools were opened at St. Rita's parish, Oakland Beach, and St. Catherine's parish, Apponaug, Rhode Island.
- 1941—St. Leo's new parochial school opened.
Upon the completion of the new building of Mt. St. Rita, this edifice was dedicated by the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough on May 22.
St. John the Baptist school in New Bedford was opened. The Sisters commuted from St. Kilian's.
Catechetical and Sunday school work began at St. Michael's parish, Georgiaville, Rhode Island.
- 1942—The convent at St. John the Baptist parish, New Bedford, was opened.
The statues of Our Lady of Grace and of St. Joseph were erected at Mt. St. Rita.
The Sisters moved into St. Brendan's Convent, Riverside, on September 8.
Catechetical work was begun at St. Vincent's parish, Bradford. Sisters commenced catechetical work and Sunday school at St. Theresa's parish, Pawtucket, and Sunday school at St. Agnes' parish, Providence.
- 1943—Sunday schools were opened at Our Lady of Mercy parish, East Greenwich, Holy Angels parish, Barrington, and St. Luke's parish, West Barrington. Catechetical work was begun at Our Lady of Victory parish, Aashaway, and catechetical and Sunday school work at Sts. Peter and Paul's parish, Phenix.
- 1944—Right Reverend Fulton J. Sheen spoke to the novices at Mt. St. Rita on May 24.
First printing of the vocation pamphlet, *Tell Us About Catherine McAuley*, was published.
- 1945—Sister Mary Bonaventure Egan, R.S.M., celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of her profession. The Most Reverend Francis P. Keough celebrated Mass at St. Xavier's for her intentions.
The Novitiate Training School at Mt. St. Rita, called the Mercy College of Education, was affiliated with the Catholic University of America.
Sisters began Sunday school at St. Brigid's parish, Thornton, Rhode Island, and catechetical work at St. Joseph's parish, Hope Valley, Rhode Island.
Plans were inaugurated for a high school for girls at Mt. St. Mary's, Fall River, at the request of the Most Reverend James E. Cassidy, Bishop of Fall River.
Outdoor Stations of the Cross were donated and erected at Mt. St. Rita.
- 1946—The Bayview Alumnae honored Sister Mary Eulalia Quirk, R.S.M., on the seventieth anniversary of her graduation from Bayview. Governor John O. Pastore was the speaker for the occasion.
Mt. St. Mary's Academy, Fall River, Massachusetts, was formally opened on September 3.
Sunday schools were opened at Quonset Point, Rhode Island, St. Mary's parish, Wrentham, Massachusetts, and at St. Philip's parish, Greenville, Rhode Island. Catechetical work was begun at St. Mary's parish, Crompton, Rhode Island.
The outdoor Stations at Mt. St. Rita were blessed on September 24.
Our Lady of Fatima Shrine at Mt. St. Rita was blessed by Reverend Cornelius J. Holland on October 27.

1947—Catechetical work began at St. Clare's parish, Misquamicut, Rhode Island.

Salve Regina College, Newport, opened in September.

Sister Mary Isabel Earley, R.S.M., was elected on August 28 as General Councilor, to reside at the General Motherhouse, Bethesda, Maryland.

Sisters took up residence at St. John the Evangelist Convent, Attleboro, Massachusetts, on September 15.

The community at Mt. St. Rita made the first pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima on October 13.

The Most Reverend Francis P. Keough was made Archbishop of Baltimore on December 3.

The Rhode Island Daughters of Isabella made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Fatima Shrine at Mt. St. Rita on December 14.

1948—The school and dormitory building at Bayview was completely destroyed by fire on February 5.

Bayview High School students continued school work on February 12 at Brightside School, Riverside. The convent building was used for the elementary grades.

The Aldrich Estate adjoining Mt. St. Rita was purchased on February 21.

Two hundred acres adjacent to Mt. St. Rita known as the Highland View Farm were purchased on April 19.

The Sisters occupied the new convent of Sts. Peter and Paul in Phenix, Rhode Island.

The Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney was consecrated Bishop of the diocese of Providence, July 14.

Sisters began catechetical work and Sunday school at St. Lawrence's parish, Centredale, and catechetical work at Sts. Peter and Paul's parish, Phenix, Rhode Island.

Mercy Mount Country Day School, remodelled on the Aldrich Estate, opened on September 13 with eighty pupils.

Four Sisters were appointed to St. Mary's Sunday school at Foxboro, Massachusetts.

Mother Provincial, Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., and Sister Mary James, R.S.M., attended a convention held at Mercy Hospital in Chicago for all Mothers Provincial and Deans of Colleges. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss affiliation between hospitals and colleges. They returned on September 18.

The new convent at St. Matthew's, Auburn, was blessed on September 21, the Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney presiding.

The third annual pilgrimage was made at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine on October 17.

Mercy Hall, the new building at Salve Regina College, was blessed on December 12.

1949—St. Mary's Academy, Bayview, opened for the first session in the new High School Building on January 31.

The Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D., blessed the new building at Bayview on March 25.

Sister Mary Constance, R.S.M., in recognition for outstanding work in the field of Science, particularly in regard to the Annual High School Science Fairs, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Education degree from Rhode Island College of Education on June 18.

A new convent at St. Joseph's, Fall River, and the convent and school at St. Anthony's, Riverpoint, were opened.

Sisters began catechetical work and Sunday school at St. Patrick's parish, Harrisville, Rhode Island.

1950—Announcement of the Sisters of Mercy Centennial Fund Campaign to be held in November was made.

At the Commencement Exercises of Providence College on June 6, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred on Mother Mary Hilda Miley, R.S.M., Mother Provincial, as President of Salve Regina College.

New convents opened in September: St. Mary's, Warren, St. Teresa's, Pawtucket, Our Lady of Mercy, East Greenwich.

Sisters began Sunday school work at St. Francis parish, Hillsgrove, Rhode Island.

1951—Observance of the Centennial of the Sisters of Mercy in Rhode Island opened with a Solemn Pontifical Mass of thanksgiving celebrated by His Excellency, Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D., in the Cathedral on April 11.

A centennial pageant was staged in the audi-

torium at St. Mary's Academy, Bayview, presented by high school girls of Saint Xavier's Academy, Saint Mary's Academy, Bayview, and Mount Saint Mary's Academy, Fall River, Massachusetts.

Moore Hall at Salve Regina College was opened on April 1.

Seventy-nine Sisters conduct Religious Vacation Schools during the month of July in twenty-three parishes as follows:

St. Matthew's, Cranston; St. Michael's, Providence; St. Mary's, Pawtucket; Our Lady of Mercy, East Greenwich; St. Luke's, West Barrington; Immaculate Conception, Westerly; St. Margaret's, Rumford; St. Joseph's, Pascoag; St. Peter's, Pawtuxet;

St. Rita's, Oakland Beach; St. Mark's, Jamestown; St. Edward's, Pawtucket; St. Mary's, Warren; St. William's, Norwood; St. Patrick's, Providence; St. Anthony's, North Providence; St. Michael's, Georgiaville; St. Brendan's, Riverside; St. Mary's, Carolina; St. Vincent's, Bradford; St. Mary's, Crompton; St. Joseph's, Pawtucket; Our Lady of Grace, Johnston.

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- Landrigan, Sister Mary Constance, R.S.M., *The Science Counsellor*, "Rhode Island Holds a Science Fair", March, 1947.
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BOOKS IN BRAILLE

Sister Mary Assumpta King, R.S.M., A.B., teaches private lessons in braille on both slate and writer to a group of sighted persons working among the blind of Rhode Island. These include two college students studying to work in the foreign missions field, three nurses, four social workers, four teachers, one stenographer and both parents in two families who have a blind child in Perkins Institution for the Blind. Of this group, four already have certificates as Braille Transcribers from the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Sister Mary Assumpta has transcribed the following books in braille:

- The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin*
- The Ideals of Mother McAuley* by Mother Mary Hilda Miley, R.S.M.
- The Meaning of Fatima* by C. C. Martindale, S.J.
- The Miracle of the Bells* by Russel Janney

Doctoral Dissertations

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| <p>Conley, Sister Mary Martina, R.S.M., Literary Defenders of the Faith in Germany During the First Half of the Sixteenth Century. 1940</p> <p>Hines, Sister Mary Ignatius, R.S.M., La Sainte Vierge chez les Poetes du Renouveau Catholique Contemporain. 1935</p> | <p>Miley, Mother Mary Hilda, R.S.M., A Poem of Beauty; Artistic Soul of Mother Catherine McAuley. 1935</p> <p>O'Hare, Sister Mary James, R.S.M., The Poetic Vocation of Francis Thompson. 1936</p> <p>Scanlan, Sister Mary Evangelista, R.S.M., Interest as Found in Livy and His Methods of Arousing It. 1936</p> |
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Master of Arts Theses

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| <p>Bland, Sister Mary Natalie, R.S.M., A Study of the Third and Fourth Grade Geography Texts. 1939</p> <p>Brady, Sister Mary Louise, R.S.M., Tableau and Character Sketches in <i>Tacitus</i> Especially in the Histories. 1935</p> <p>Cassidy, Sister Mary Rosella, R.S.M., Creating Literary Interests in the Junior High School. 1934</p> <p>Cavanagh, Sister Mary Rose Agnes, R.S.M., Some Generalizations of the Properties of the Simson Line of a Triangle. 1940</p> <p>Clark, Sister Mary Cyril, R.S.M., A Study of Possible Supervisory Functions of the Teaching Principal in the Elementary School. 1938</p> <p>Cobb, Sister Mary Irene, R.S.M., Art Education in America-at-War. 1943</p> <p>Conley, Sister Mary Martina, R.S.M., The Ethical Content of <i>Pro Lege Manilia</i>. 1931</p> <p>Corbett, Sister Mary Carmela, R.S.M., Douglas Hyde's Revelation of Ireland's Literary Heritage. 1946</p> <p>Dalton, Sister Mary Anacletus, R.S.M., The Character of David in Sixteenth Century French Drama. 1939</p> <p>Devlin, Sister Bernadette Marie, R.S.M., An Exposition and an Evaluation of the Position of Director of Dramatic Arts in Catholic Colleges and Secondary Schools and in Non-Sectarian Colleges and Secondary Schools. 1943</p> | <p>Fitzgerald, Sister Mary Antonine, R.S.M., Anglo-American Diplomacy 1898-1903. 1943</p> <p>Heffernan, Sister Mary Felicita, R.S.M., Retention During Day and Night Intervals. 1937</p> <p>Hines, Sister Mary Ignatius, R.S.M., The Foreign Influence of Seventeenth Century Drama in France. 1929</p> <p>Kiernan, Sister Mary Laurene, R.S.M., Americanism of Richard Olney's Venezuefan. 1942</p> <p>Landrigan, Sister Mary Constance, R.S.M., A Comparative Study of the English and Metric Systems. 1935</p> <p>Macomber, Sister Mary Elise, R.S.M., The Aeneid: A National Epic of the Roman Empire. 1929</p> <p>McCarthy, Sister Mary Anselm, R.S.M., A Study of the Vocabulary of Third and Fourth Grade Geography Texts. 1940</p> <p>McGann, Sister Mary Celestine, R.S.M., Shakespeare's Psychology of Temptation as Shown in <i>Macbeth</i>. 1929</p> <p>McGowan, Sister Mary Anthony, R.S.M., A Study of Report Cards for Use in Catholic Elementary Schools. 1939</p> <p>McGuirl, Sister Mary Mauritia, R.S.M., Mrs. Elizabeth L. Cushing, Early American Novelist. 1937</p> <p>Murray, Sister Mary Rose, R.S.M., Pliny the Younger as Provincial of Bithynia. 1935</p> <p>O'Brien, Sister Mary Louise, R.S.M., Character Education in the Catholic Elementary and Junior High School. 1930</p> |
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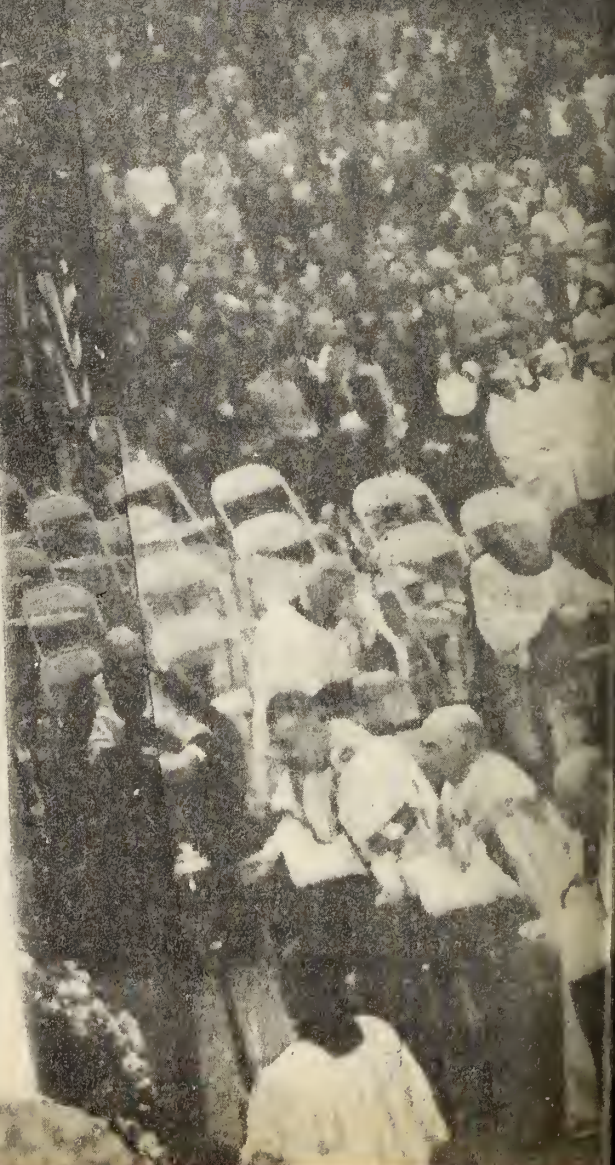
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